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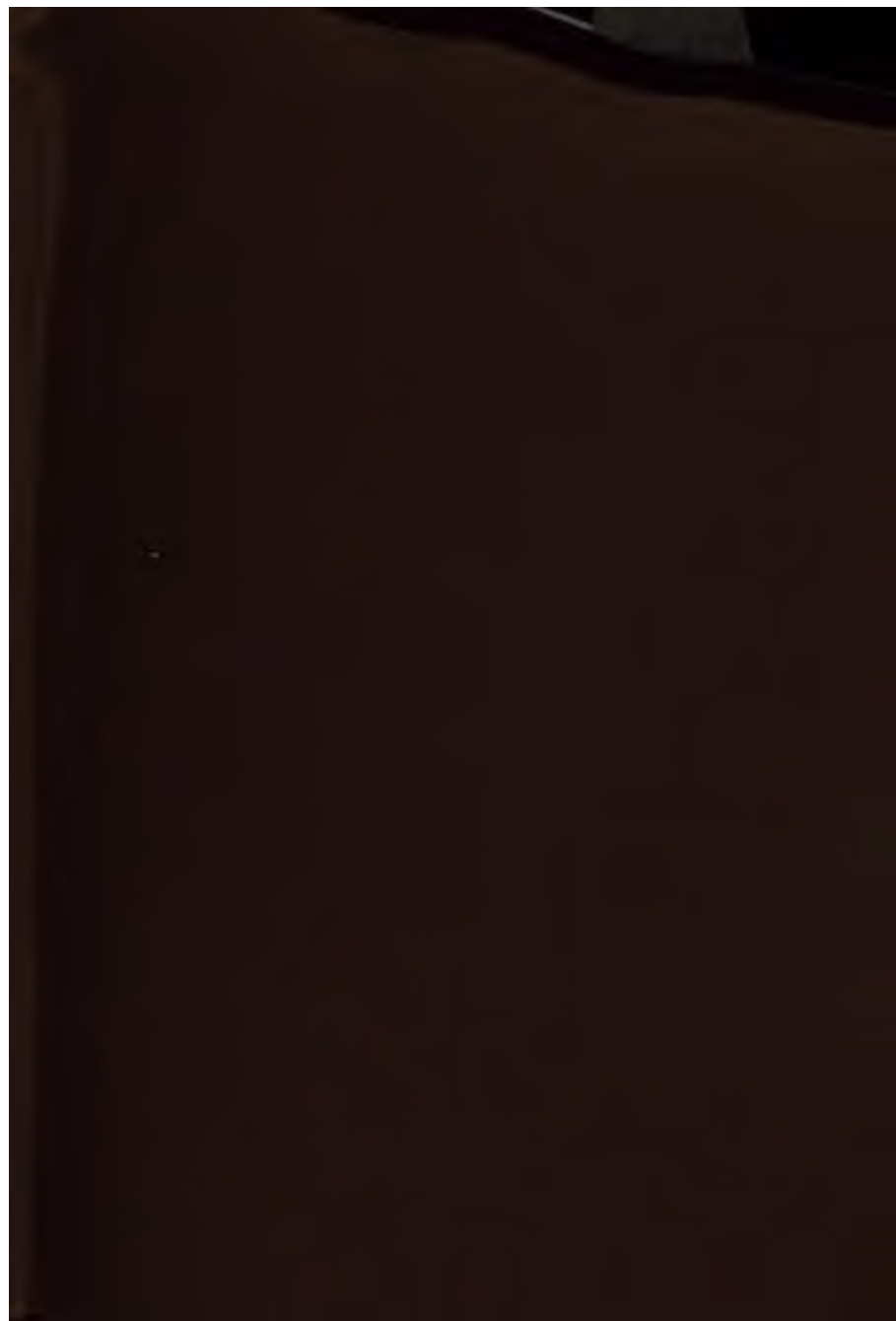
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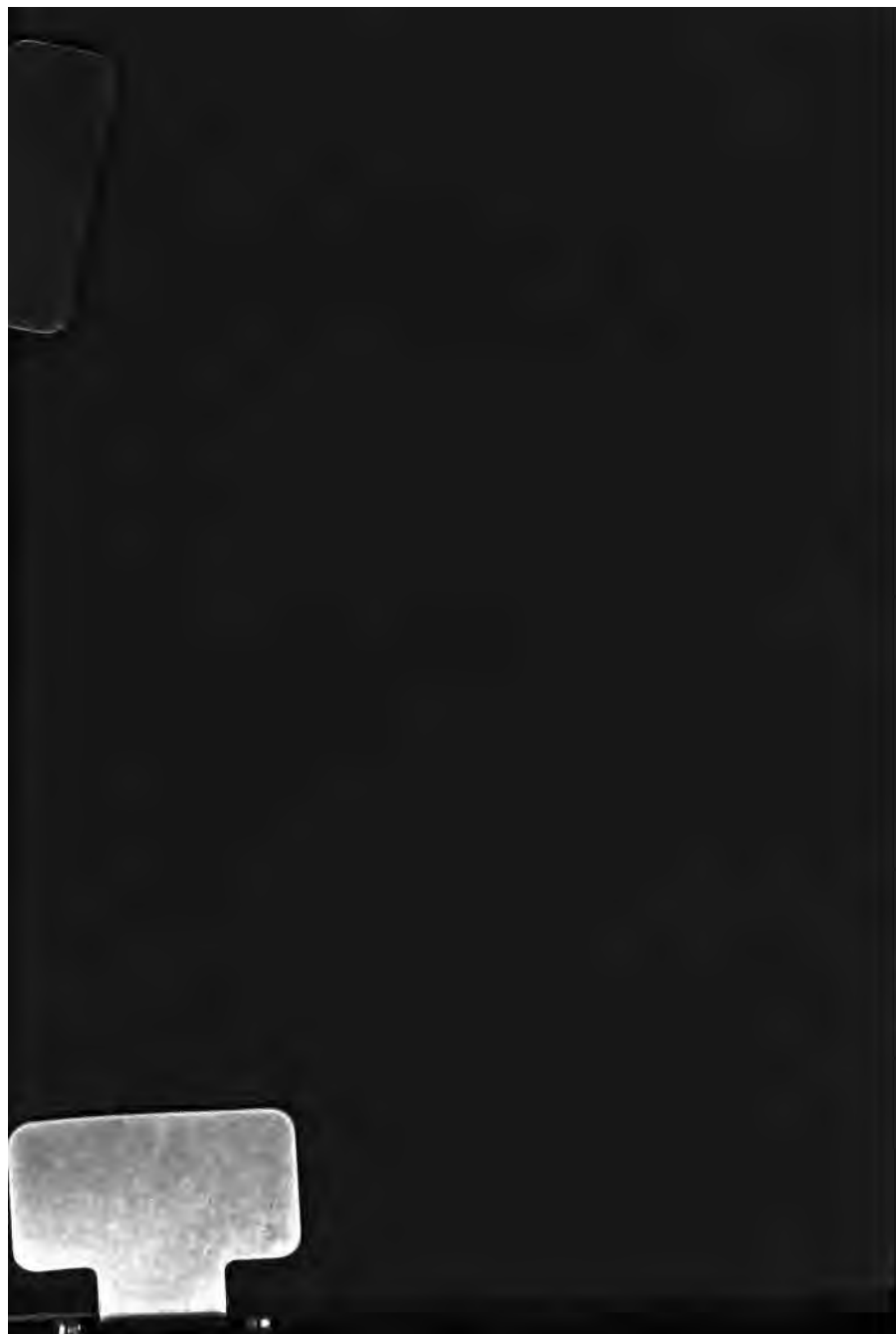


Catholic Sermons.

SELECT DISCOURSES
BY EMINENT MINISTERS
OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS







The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It then presents a literature review of the existing research on the topic. The second part of the paper describes the methodology used in the study, including the data collection and analysis techniques. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study, and the fourth part discusses the implications of the findings. The paper concludes with a summary of the main findings and a list of references.

The research was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of good research practice. The data was collected from a representative sample of the population, and the analysis was carried out using appropriate statistical methods. The results of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, and the implications of the findings are discussed in detail.

The findings of the study have important implications for the field of research, and they provide valuable insights into the issues being studied. The research also has practical implications, and it can be used to inform policy and practice. The paper is a valuable contribution to the literature, and it is hoped that it will be of interest to a wide range of readers.

The research was funded by the [funding body], and the authors would like to thank them for their support. The authors also would like to thank the participants in the study for their contribution to the research. The paper is the work of the authors, and it is published in its current form without any external review or editing.

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Select Discourses by Eminent Ministers
of various Denominations.

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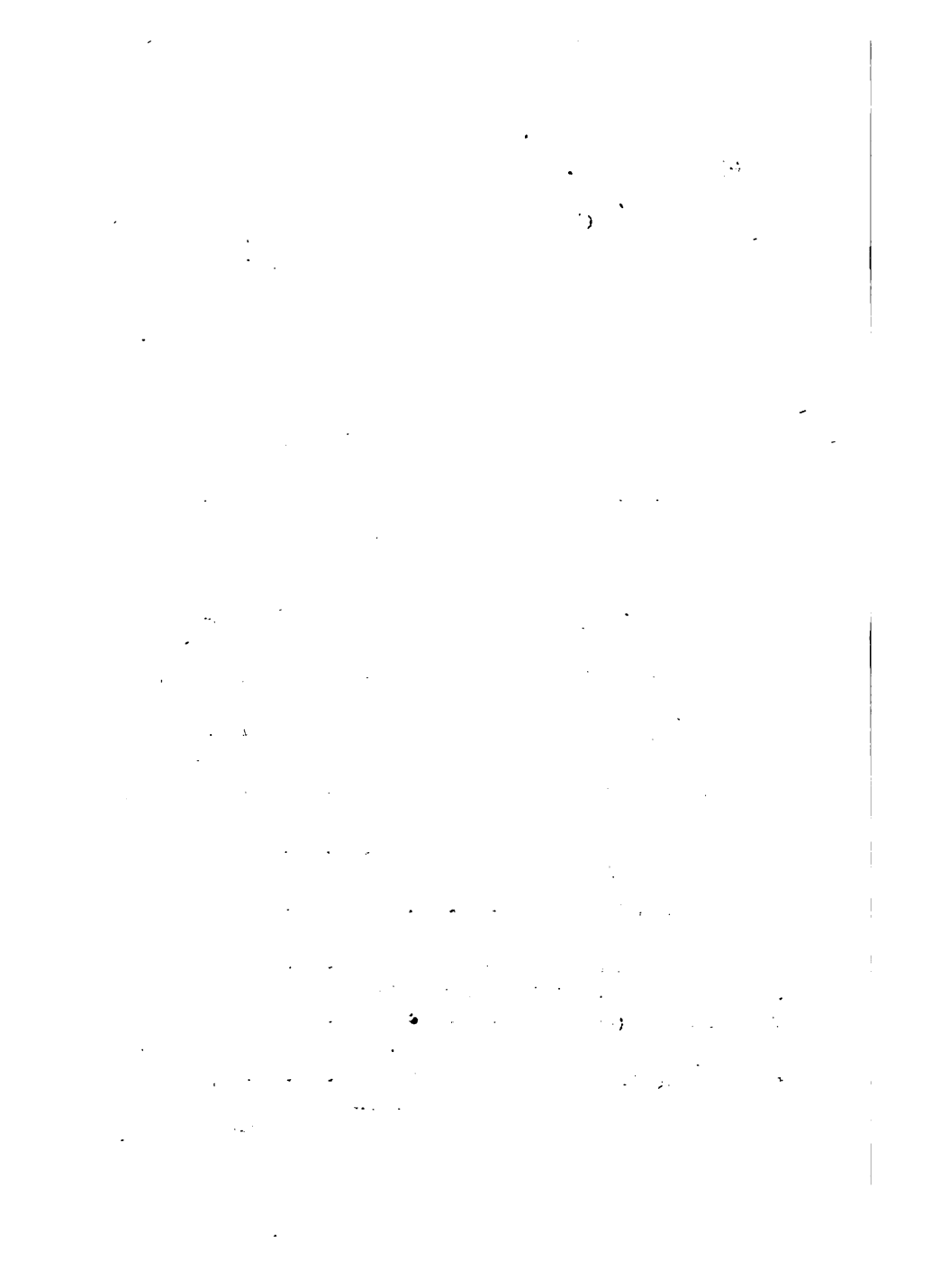


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REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D.

THE UPPER AND NETHER SPRINGS.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D.

*Delivered before the congregation of "The Brooklyn Tabernacle,"
worshipping in the Academy of Music, New York.*

"Thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water ;
And he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."—Joshua
xv. 19.

THE city of Debir was the Boston of antiquity, a great place for brain and books. Caleb wanted it, and he offered his daughter Achsah as a prize to any one who would capture that city. It was a strange thing for Caleb to do, and yet the man that could take the city would have, at any rate, two elements of manhood—bravery and patriotism. Besides, I do not think that Caleb was as foolish in offering his daughter to the conqueror of Debir, as thousands in this day who seek alliances for their children with those who have large means, without any reference to moral or mental acquirements. Of two evils, I would rather measure happiness by the length of the sword than by the length of the pocket-book. In one case there is sure to be one good element of character, in the other there may be none at all. With Caleb's daughter as a prize to fight for, General Othniel rode into the battle. The gates of Debir

were thundered into the dust, and the city of books lay at the feet of the conquerors. The work done, Othniel comes back to claim his bride. Having conquered the city, it is no great job for him to conquer the girl's heart, for however faint-hearted a woman herself may be, she always loves courage in a man. I never saw an exception to that. The wedding festivity having gone by, Othniel and Achsah are about to go to their new home. However loudly the cymbals may clash and the laughter ring, parents are always sad when a fondly-cherished daughter goes off to stay; and Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, knows that now is the time to ask almost anything she wants of her father. It seems that Caleb, the good old man, had given as a wedding present to his daughter a piece of land that was mountainous, and sloping southward towards the deserts of Arabia, swept with some very hot winds. It was called "a south land." But Achsah wants an addition of property; she wants a piece of land that is well-watered and fertile. Now it is no wonder that Caleb, standing amid the bridal party, his eyes so full of tears because she was going away that he could hardly see her at all, gives her more than she asks. She said to him, "Thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs."

I never saw that passage until a little while ago, and as I came upon it, I said, if God will give me grace, I shall preach a sermon upon that before long. The fact is, that as Caleb, the father, gave Achsah, the daughter, a south land, so God gives to us His world. I am very thankful He has given it to us. But I am like Achsah in the fact that I am not satisfied with the portion. Trees,

and flowers, and grass, and blue skies, are very well in their places; but he who has nothing but this world for a portion has no portion at all. It is a mountainous land, sloping off towards the desert of sorrow, swept by fiery siroccoes; it is "a south land," a poor portion for any man that tries to put his trust in it. What has been your experience? What has been the experience of every man, of every woman that has tried this world for a portion? Queen Elizabeth, amid the surroundings of pomp, is unhappy, because the painter sketches too minutely the wrinkles on her face, and she indignantly cries out, "You must strike off my likeness without any shadows." Hogarth, at the very height of his artistic triumph, is stung almost to death with chagrin because the painting he had dedicated to the King does not seem to be acceptable; for George II. cries out, "Who is this Hogarth? Take his trumpery out of my presence." Brinsley Sheridan thrilled the earth with his eloquence, but had for his last words, "I am absolutely undone." Walter Scott, fumbling around the inkstand, trying to write, says to his daughter, "Oh, take me back to my room: there is no rest for Sir Walter but in the grave." Stephen Girard, the wealthiest man in his day, or, at any rate, only second in wealth, says, "I live the life of a galley slave: when I arise in the morning my one effort is to work so hard that I can sleep when it gets to be night." Charles Lamb, applauded of all the world, in the very midst of his literary triumphs, says, "Do you remember, Bridget, when we used to laugh from the shilling gallery at the play? There are now no good plays to laugh at from the boxes." But why go so far as that? I need to go no further than your street to find

an illustration of what I am saying. Pick me out ten successful worldlings—and you know what I mean by thorough successful worldlings—pick me out ten successful worldlings, and you cannot find more than one that looks happy. Care drags him across the ferry; care drags him back. Take your stand at two o'clock at the corner of Nassau and Wall Streets, or at the corner of Canal Street and Broadway, and see the agonized physiognomies. Your bankers, your insurance men, your importers, your wholesalers, and your retailers, as a class—as a class are they happy? No. Care dogs their steps; and, making no appeal to God for help or comfort, they are tossed every whither, while Jay Gould makes New York quake from Central Park to the battery! How has it been with you, my hearer? Are you more contented in the house of fourteen rooms than you were in the two rooms you had in a house when you started? Have you not had more care and worriment since you won that 50,000 dollars than you did before? Some of the poorest men I have ever known have been those of great fortune. A man of small means may be put in great business straights, but the ghastliest of all embarrassments is that of the man who has large estates. The men who commit suicide because of monetary losses are those who cannot bear the burden any more, because they have only 15,000 dollars left. In Bowling Green, N.Y. there is a house where Talleyrand used to go. He was a favourite man. All the world knew him, and he had wealth almost unlimited. Yet at the close of his life he says, "Behold, eighty-three years have passed without any practical result, save fatigue of body and fatigue of mind, great discouragement for the future, and great disgust for the past." Oh, my friends, this is "a south

land," and it slopes off toward deserts of sorrow; and the prayer which Achsah made to her father Caleb, we make this day to our Father God: "Thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water. And He gave them the upper springs and the nether springs."

Blessed be God we have more advantages given us than we can really appreciate. We have spiritual blessings offered us in this world which I shall call the nether springs, and glories in the world to come which I shall call the upper springs.

Where shall I find words enough threaded with light to set forth the pleasure of religion? David, unable to describe it in words, played it on a harp. Mrs. Hemans, not finding enough power in prose, sings that praise in a canto. Christopher Wren, unable to describe it in language, sprung it into the arches of St. Paul's. John Bunyan, unable to present it in ordinary phraseology, takes all the fascination of allegory. Handel, with ordinary music unable to reach the height of the theme, rouses it up in an oratorio. Oh, there is no life on earth so happy as a really Christian life. I do not mean a sham Christian life, but a real Christian life. Where there is a thorn, there is a whole garland of roses. Where there is one groan, there are three doxologies. Where there is one day of cloud, there is a whole season of sunshine. Take the humblest Christian man that you know—Angels of God canopy him with their white wings; the Lightnings of Heaven are his armed allies; the Lord is his Shepherd, picking out for him green pastures by still waters; if he walks forth, Heaven is his body-guard; if he lie down to sleep, ladders of light, angels blossoming, are let into his dreams; if he

be thirsty, the potentates of Heaven are his cup-bearers. If he sit down to food, his plain table blooms into the King's banquet. Men say, "Look at that old fellow with the worn-out coat;" the Angels of God cry, "Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates, and let him come in." Fastidious people cry, "Get off my front steps;" the door-keepers of Heaven cry, "Come you, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." When he comes to die, though he may be carried out in a pine box to the potter's field, to that potter's field the chariots of Christ will come down and the cavalcade will crowd all the boulevards of heaven.

I bless Christ for the present satisfaction of religion. It makes a man all right with reference to the past; it makes a man all right with reference to the future. Oh these nether springs of comfort! They are perennial. The foundations of God standeth sure having this seal—"The Lord knoweth them that are His." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, who hath mercy upon them." Oh, cluster of diamonds set in burnished gold! Oh, nether springs of comfort bursting through all the valleys of trial and tribulation! When you see, you of the world, what satisfaction there is on earth in religion, do you not thirst after it as the daughter of Caleb thirsted after the water springs? It is no stagnant pond, scummed over with malaria, but springs of water leaping from the Rock of Ages! Take up one cup of that spring water, and across the top of the chalice will float the delicate shadows of the Heavenly wall, the yellow of jasper, the green of emerald, the blue of sar-

donyx, the fire of jacinthe. I wish I could make you understand the joy religion is to some of us. It makes a man happy while he lives, and glad when he dies. With two feet upon a chair and bursting with dropsies, I heard an old man in the poor-house cry out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." I looked around and said, "What has this man got to thank God for?" It makes the lame man leap as a hart, and the dumb sing. They say that the old Puritan religion is a juiceless and joyless religion; but I remember reading of Dr. Goodwin, the celebrated Puritan, who, in his last moment, said, "Is this dying? Why my bow abides in strength! I am swallowed up in God!" "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Oh you who have been trying to satisfy yourselves with the "south land" of this world do you not feel that you would, this morning, like to have access to the nether springs of spiritual comfort? Would you not like to have Jesus Christ bend over your cradle and bless your table and heal your wounds, and strew flowers of consolation all up and down the graves of your dead?

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live:
'Tis religion can supply
Sweetest comfort when we die."

But I have something better to tell you suggested by this text. It seems that old father Caleb on the wedding-day of his daughter wanted to make her just as happy as possible. Though Othniel was taking her away, and his heart was almost broken because she was going, yet he gives her a "south land," not only that but the *nether* springs, not only that but the *upper* springs. Oh, God,

my Father, I thank thee that Thou hast given me a "south land" in this world, and the nether springs of spiritual comfort in this world, but more than all I thank Thee for the upper springs in Heaven.

It is very fortunate that we cannot see Heaven until we get into it. Oh, Christian man, if you could see what a place it is, we would never get you back again to the office, or store, or shop, and the duties you ought to perform would go neglected. I am glad I shall not see that world until I enter it. Suppose we were allowed to go on an excursion into that good land with the idea of returning. When we got there and heard the song and looked at their raptured faces and mingled in the supernatural society, we would cry out, "Let us stay! We are coming here anyhow. Why take the trouble of going back again to that old world? We are here now, let us stay." And it would take angelic violence to put us out of that world, if once we got there. But as people who cannot afford to pay for an entertainment, sometimes come around it and look through the door ajar or through the openings in the fence, so we come and look through the crevices into that good land which God has provided for us. We can just catch a glimpse of it. We come near enough to hear the rumbling of the eternal orchestra, though not near enough to know who blows the cornet or who fingers the harp. My soul spreads out both wings and claps them in triumph at the thought of those upper springs. One of them breaks from beneath the throne; another breaks forth from beneath the altar of the temple; another at the door of "the house of many mansions." Upper springs of gladness! upper springs of light! upper springs of love! It is no fancy of mine. "The Lamb which

is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water." Oh, Saviour Divine! roll in our souls: one of those anticipated raptures! Pour around the roots of the parched tongue one drop of that liquid life! Toss before our vision those fountains of God, rainbowed with eternal victory. Hear it. They are never sick there, not so much as a headache, or twinge rheumatic, or thrust neuralgic. The inhabitant never says, "I am sick." They are never tired there. Flight to farthest world is only the play of a holiday. They never sin there. It is as easy for them to be holy as it is for us to sin. They never die there. You might go through all the outskirts of the great city and find not one place where the ground was broken for a grave. The eyesight of the redeemed is never blurred with tears. There is health in every cheek. There is spring in every foot. There is majesty on every brow. There is joy in every heart. There is hosanna on every lip. How they must pity us as they look over and look down and see us and say, "Poor things away down in that world." And when some Christian is hurled into a fatal accident they cry, "Good, he is coming." And when we stand around the couch of some loved one (whose strength is going away) and we shake our heads forebodingly, they cry, "I am glad he is worse; he has been down there long enough. There! he is dead. Come home! come home!" Oh, if we could only get our ideas about that future world untwisted, our thought of transfer from here to there would be as pleasant to us as it was to a little child that was dying. She said, "Papa, when will I go home?" And he said, "To-day, Florence." "To-day? so soon? I am so glad."

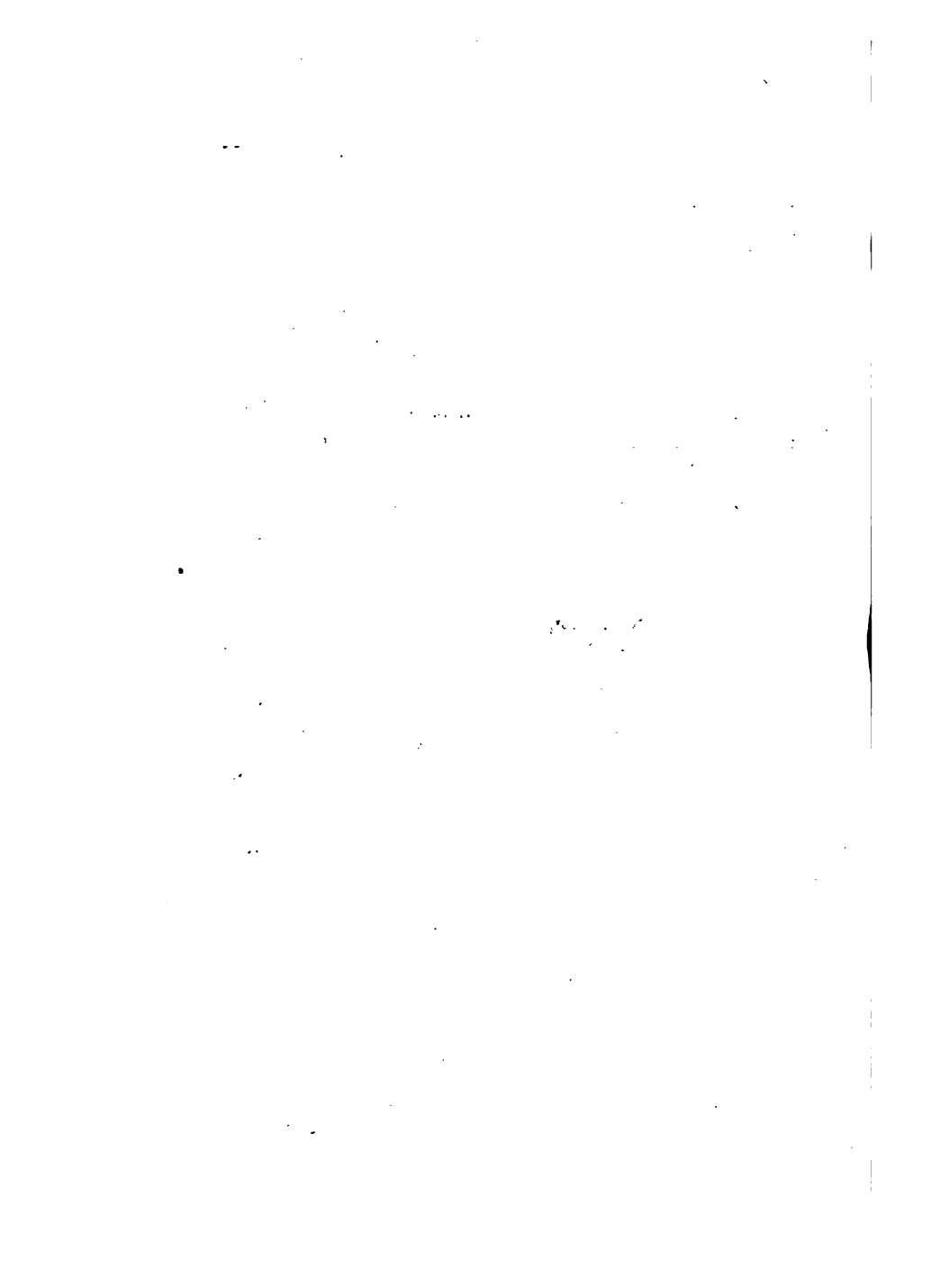
I wish I could stimulate you with these thoughts, oh Christian man, to the highest possible exhilaration. The day of your deliverance is coming, is coming. It is rolling on with the shining wheels of the day, and the jet wheels of the night. Every thump of the heart is only a hammer stroke striking off another chain of clay. Better scour the deck and coil the rope, for harbour is only six miles away. Jesus will come down in the "Narrows" to meet you. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed."

Unforgiven man, unpardoned man, will you not to-day make a choice between these two portions, between the "south-land" of this world which slopes to the desert, and this glorious land which thy Father offers thee, running with eternal water courses? Why let your tongue be consumed of thirst when there are the nether springs, and the upper springs: comfort here and glory hereafter?

Let me tell you, my dear brother, that the silliest and wickedest thing a man ever does is to reject Jesus Christ. The loss of the soul is a mistake that can never be corrected. It is a downfall that knows no alleviation, it is a ruin that is remediless, it is a sickness that has no medication, it is a grave into which a man goes but never comes out. Therefore, putting my hand on your shoulder, as one brother puts his hand on the shoulder of a brother, I say this day, be manly, and surrender your heart to Christ. You have been long enough serving the world. Now begin to serve the Lord who bought you. You have tried long enough to carry these burdens. Let Jesus Christ put His shoulder under your burdens. Do I hear any one in the audience say, "I mean to attend to that after a while; it is not just the time." It is the time, for the simple reason that you are sure of no other; and God sent you into the

Academy of Music this morning, and He sent me here to confront you with this message, and you must hear now that Christ died to save your soul, and that if you want to be saved you may be saved. "Whosoever will, let him come." You will never find any more convenient season than this. Some of you have been waiting ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty years. On some of you the snow has fallen. I see it on your brow and yet you have not attended to those duties which belong to the very springtime of life. It is September with you now, it is October with you, it is December with you. I am no alarmist. I simply know this: if a man does not repent in this world he never repents at all, and that now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Oh, put off this matter no longer. Do not turn your back on Jesus Christ who comes to save you, lest you should lose your soul.

Last Monday morning a friend of mine started from New York to celebrate her birthday with her daughter in Virginia. Yesterday morning, just after sunrise, I stood at the gate of Greenwood waiting for her silent form to come in. It was only a few weeks ago she sat out yonder in the gallery while I preached. It is a long journey to take in one week, from New York to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to Baltimore, from Baltimore to Washington, from Washington to Virginia, from Virginia into the great Eternity! "What thy hand findeth to do, do it."







REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

THE EARLY LIFE OF DANIEL.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. DR. PARKER.

Preached in Exeter Hall on Sunday Evening, January 18th, 1874.

"And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes ;

"Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

"And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank : so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king."—Dan. i. 3, 4, 5.

SEE how the fancies of men are as threads which are worked into the web of Divine Providence. Nebuchadnezzar, in this case, displayed his taste—gave licence to his fancy. He commanded that the children who should be elected to this high honour and privilege, should be children of the king's seed and princes. He was not extending any favour to the common people. He wanted to have with him the noble persons of the blood royal, and those who had in them the kind of quality that could be turned best to his own account. He did not know what he was doing. What man amongst us is there who knows the meaning of any act that he does ? He has a meaning which he knows tolerably well, but behind every act there are outgoings, relationships, purposes, connections of which the doer himself little dreams. And were those men comforted for their captivity ? They had been taken away from their own land ; they were the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar the king, and the king appointed them meat from his own table and wine from his own vintage. Were the captives, then, satisfied ? Were all old memories banished from their recollection, all tender associations taken out of their hearts, and were they amply repaid for their exile and their captivity by

eating of the king's food and drinking of the king's wine? Let me lay special stress upon this point, if you please, for there is in it a great lesson to us all. It shows how secondary advantages may accompany the deepest humiliations. If you look at the food and the wine only, you will say, "These poor youths are well off; truly they cannot be said to be in captivity at all if they eat and drink just what the king himself takes." This is the danger of taking a superficial view of our life and its surroundings. We look at what we have in the hand; we see the bounties under which our table is groaning, and we say, "Well, whatever may be said by preachers and by moralists, after all we are doing tolerably well." Please to understand that the men who were offered the king's bread and the king's wine were slaves. If you look at the advantages I describe, those advantages are merely secondary and relative. Underneath all these condescensions on the king's part and enjoyment on the part of the exiles, there is the grim and terrible fact that the men were not masters of their own time. And yet how well off they seemed to be. The king sent them a portion of his own meat and of the very wine which he drank. What more could they desire? Nothing, if they were mere animals. Regarding yourself as a mere animal, what more do you want than to eat and drink, and to be well clothed and sheltered? Regard yourself as a being possessed of spiritual life, religious sympathies, and endowed with a splendid destiny, and then tell me how far any food, any wine can satisfy the inner appetencies—the keener hunger of the soul. Take a man's freedom from him; lock him up in a chamber lined with velvet, and made glowing and lustrous with the highest productions of art: What are they to him? Nothing, if he be more than an animal. He says, "These are beautiful things, but I cannot see them; I cannot look upon them; they mock me. I want my liberty; I would rather be running on the wildest hills of my native country than be enjoying all this ease, and luxury, and light, and beauty, and music."

When I was in the United States of America, I heard this statement: A slave, who had served his master well, was honoured in his master's will with his freedom, and

with the freedom of his wife and children, and with a donation of 500 dollars; and when the will was read to the man, he said, "No, what have I done that I should be turned away from the old estate; I will not have my freedom and I will not have the dollars. I will remain here and be what I have been for the last twenty years. My old master and his wife were kind to us in our sorrow and affliction; what do I want with my freedom? Go into the North, where I shall be sneered at, and go amongst strangers that don't care for me. No, please let me remain on the old ground." And that was repeated as an argument for slavery. The reasoning proceeded in this wise: "How could slavery be so bad a thing as the abolitionists have pictured, when a man who had offered to him his freedom, his wife's freedom, and the freedom of his children, and a gift of money, deliberately refuse it? Yea, even passionately reject it?" And at first sight there did seem to be something in the reason, but really and truly the thing that is in that reasoning tells against slavery, not for it. Any system that could take out of a man his native instinctive love of freedom, any system that could so far de-humanise a man as to make him prefer captivity to slavery, is a system that has damnation written upon its forehead by the finger of God. I am afraid there are persons who are reasoning just so about the world, and the flesh, and the devil; people who say that preachers and moral teachers generally take quite a false view of sin. They say that the sinner has a hard time of it, and that the way of transgressors is hard, and they have chosen piety, and they have elected to be doing penance of divers kind all their days long. "Ha, ha, if they knew what we have to eat and what we have to drink—a portion from the king's table—methinks they would talk differently, and their sermons would be less gloomy." There is something in the reasoning; but as in the former case, so in this, the reasoning tells against the sinner. Any course of conduct that can make a man apparently happy without God, that can take him down to that low point of humanity which is satisfied with mere food and drink, is a course of conduct that merits the censure and condemnation of the Most High.

When these arrangements were made known to Daniel, and to those who were elected to stand with him and to undergo this training, we read in the 8th verse the following words: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." In the first instance there was a religious difficulty. Daniel had been brought up in the Mosaic Institutions, and, therefore, he had been trained to abjure all meat that had been offered to idols, and all drink that had been laid upon the altar of forbidden gods. He was a religious man from home. He was a man who took the commandments into captivity with him, even into captivity. Alas! there are some of us who can throw off our old selves and do in Rome as the Romans do with a vengeance. Daniel, driven into captivity, took his religion with him. When we are compelled into difficult circumstances, do we take our religious faith with us? When we go away to enjoy ourselves in other countries, do we take with us the old home training? Do we repeat the commandments as they were thundered from Sinai, and do we re-pronounce the oath we took when we gave ourselves to the Saviour, as He hung upon the cross, and welcomed us to His love, and kingdom, and service? That is a poor religion which can be put off like a garment we are tired of for the time being, and can be put on again to serve occasion. How independent man is who has risen above the point of the merely animal life! Temperance all the world over is independence. Moderation means mastery. There are some men in the world who will not be pampered; Daniel was one of them; his compeers belonged to the same class. There are men, alas! whom you can seduce from paths of righteousness and services of duty by offering them the wine when it is red in the cup. If they are going upon the King's business and you hold up wine in the air, and say, "come, taste," the King's business may perish. They are drawn aside; they are slaves of their appetites. Their arms are free; their hands are not bound; their limbs have upon them no mark of fetter or manacle, but still they are the bondsmen of

their passions. Is not he a strong man who can pass by the well-laden table and say, "I will not sit down to the feast because I have religious reasons. I have a vow to keep; I have an errand to accomplish; I have a message to deliver"?

You remember when a young man went arm in arm with John Wesley into a room that was well provided with all luxuries for the table. He whispered to the preacher, "There is not much self-denial here, Mr. Wesley." "No," said that keen wit; "but there is a fine field for its exercise."

In order to hold yourselves masters of your appetites, begin early. It is no use a man of forty-five years of age beginning to say he is going to turn over a new leaf; the leaves won't be turned then. I think, perhaps, I may be speaking discouragingly to some man who is making at that time of life a resolution to be better. Well, to resolution, to perseverance, to devout energy it is possible, but it is not easy. Young man, lay down your cigar, it will do you no good. Throw away your pipe, it does not make you manly, it only makes you a nuisance to other and better people: and don't touch strong drink of any kind whatsoever. This is the testimony that I have to bear: that he who gives way to these things in his youth is committing suicide by inches. He is taking away his will-power; he is dulling his finest spiritual sensibilities. It does not tell upon him all at once, he may live to be an old man and say, "Well, it is a very slow poison." What he might have been he never thinks of: he only sees what he is, a tough, much-enduring man, whereas, he might have been a very prince and king, and guide, and friend among the highest classes of the land. Be sure of this, you can never do wrong if you are temperate, you cannot be wrong if you are total abstainers. You cannot get wrong if you say, "No, I will not touch this. I will have few habits, and they shall be simple, pure; such as can be named in the hearing of the most virtuous, and practised in the sight of the keenest moral critics." Will that, then, save you? It will not damn you. Is this, then, all the Gospel I have to preach? It is the beginning. It is far away enough; in fact, it does not touch the great vital question at all; but seeing that I have to deal with

thousands of people of all kinds who hear this ministry from time to time, I am obliged to give lessons elementary as well as intermediate and final, and to the young men before me I would preach from this example of Daniel, the duty, the beauty, the comfort, the grandeur of the discipline that says, "the food is excellent, the wine is the most delicious that ever was offered by the vintages of earth, but I say 'no' to them both, I will touch not, taste not, handle not." It is something early in life (for Daniel was quite a young man at the time the text speaks of him) to say "no" with a thrilling emphasis. You talk about discipline! Discipline is a manifold term: it covers a great deal of ground. Let me ask you to attend to the discipline of saying "no." I love to see the practice of manly sports of the right kind: running, leaping, swimming, going through divers gymnastic exercises. I rejoice exceedingly in all these athletic pastimes, and in all these disciplinary sports and enjoyments. They have a great purpose to serve, but there is a still higher discipline—a discipline of the soul; the discipline which enables a man to look at a bodily advantage, and to say, "I will not touch it:" the discipline which enables a man to receive an invitation, on gilt-edged paper and scented, to spend an evening with sinners in their gluttony and their wine-bibbing, and that enables him to put it in the fire. No man can do so in a right spirit, without taking a step in the upward direction. As a minister, visiting all parts of the country for upwards of twenty years, I have never gone anywhere that being an anti-smoker was an objection to my going: I have gone to places where my smoking would have been a deadly objection. You can't go anywhere where discipline will be a disadvantage to you, and where the power of saying "no" to appetites and tastes will go against you, but in life you will be very often placed in circumstances where your longings, your hungerings, and evil habitudes, will stand in your way and blight your prospects. My hope in this matter is in the young. As to the old I have little or no hope; they are gone. They will hear our lectures and sneer at them. We may speak to them about moderation, but the devil has the better of them. They cannot hear, for their ears are waxed heavy.

Daniel then said to the man who was in charge, and with whom God had given him favour, "prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; and as thou seest deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who did eat the portion of the king's meat." "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Sometimes we say we do not know how such poor people can manage! Because we take a false estimate of life altogether. You could do with nine-tenths less than you take to keep up that body of yours. I speak now about the great majority of people in saying that they would be better, cooler, healthier, and altogether improved, if they would deduct three meals a-day, and make the remaining meal nine-tenths less rich than it is at present. Oh! it takes very little to keep life going, if you did but know it. God has not founded society upon a basis that requires every man to spend £5,000 a-year. He has so constituted human life and human society, that very, very little will do, and there is plenty on the face of the earth for every man, only if a man strains himself to be a glutton and a wine-bibber, an absorbent of everything that comes in his way, then he has lost the divine line of physical training, and he is taking more than is meet, and he is not returning to society an equivalent for what he consumes. What had these young men? Pulse and water. Why, some of us would have thought, when we were in our teens, as Daniel and his fellows were, that we were being starved if we had only porridge. Ah! that is the stuff for making men of you. Depend upon it, your venison-fed men will go down, and they will be quite exhausted and want to sit down on the first stile; when the porridge-fed man goes on mile after mile, and is as fresh at the end of the day as he was at the beginning. I know this to be a fact. My friend goes out early in the morning, wet or dry, to shoot. He rises at three in the morning,

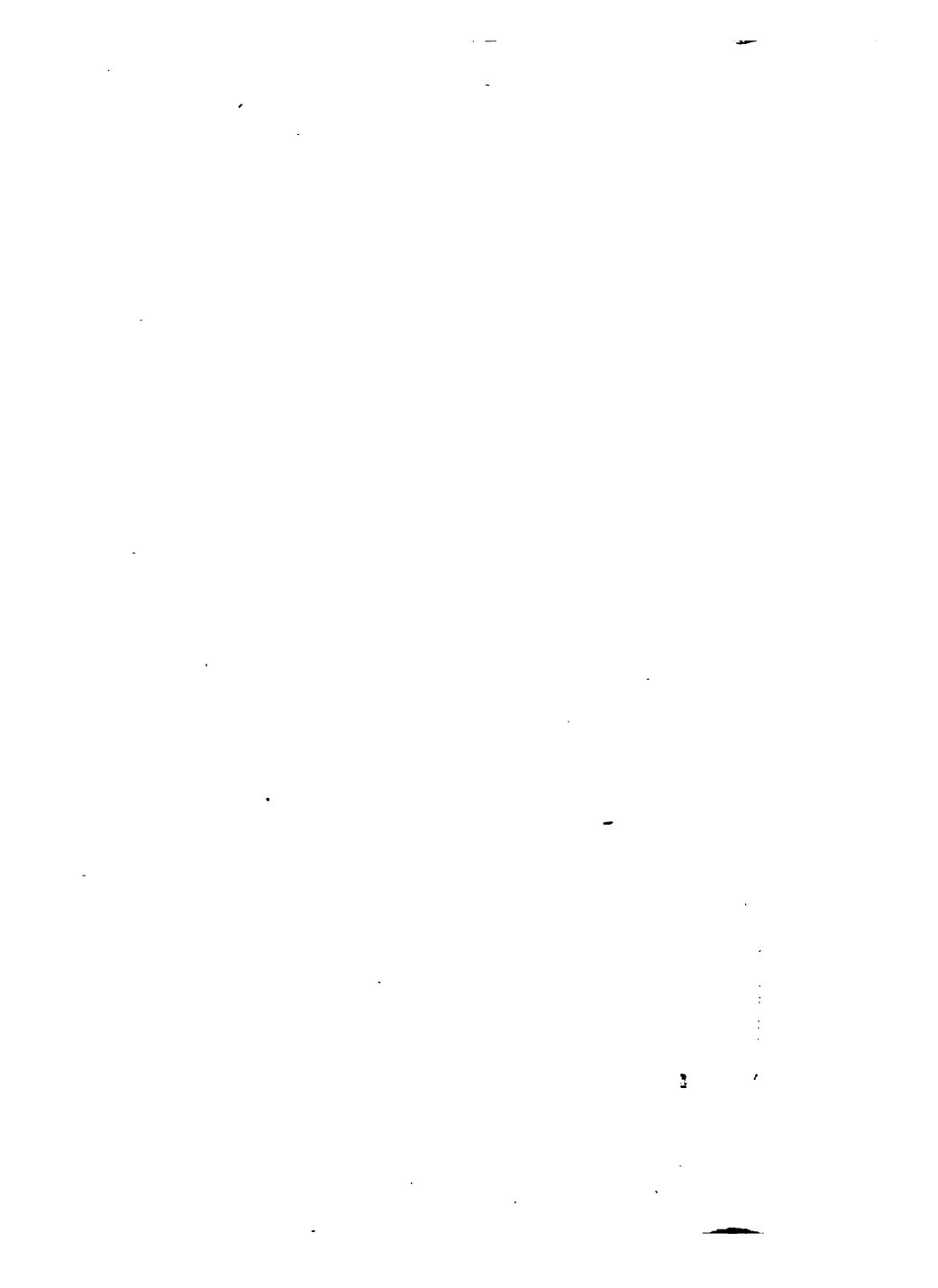
takes with him a flask of milk and a little dry bread. Other people go with him who say, "What have you got to nourish and support you?" "Only a little milk and bread." And they laugh at him; but about seven o'clock they want a morning drink; at ten o'clock they exclaim, "how thirsty we are, is it possible to get a glass of beer anywhere?" And at twelve they want another glass, and at two several more glasses, and by four o'clock in the afternoon they are puffing and blowing: they are quite exhausted, and they don't know how they will get home: and my friend walks home lithely and like a man, and finishes up the day's work with comfort and ease. God has been pleased so to make you, that it requires very little indeed to keep your heart going, your pulse beating in freshness, in vitality, in strength and in comfort. I am speaking now, remember, to the young. When a man gets towards fifty years of age, I turn very liberal with him. I am not a cynic: I am not an ascetic. I do not limit and bind a man down to the merest elementary line. When a man gets over forty years of age and has worked well up to that time, why I can indulge him to almost any extent. I then look at the thirty years he has had of hard work and noble endurance, and I exclaim, "I have nothing to say to you: you are now a full-grown man; consider yourself, consider your circumstances; see what is best for you, and do what is right in your own eyes." But to the young I am a severe disciplinarian, and I engage that twenty years after they will come to me and thank me for my discipline. Not one man, but many men have come to me, almost to curse the memory of their father and their mother, in that in early life they allowed them to do just what they pleased. They were brought up to gratify every whim, they were allowed to follow every inclination and every impulse, and then at twenty-one they were men of no strength of character, and were left to be the sport of all combinations of circumstances.

See how right-doing is always willing to be proved. Daniel was willing to take a space of ten days for the proof of the proposition which he submitted to the men who had charge of them. This is characteristic of all right-doing. If a man comes before me with a right case,

sound through and through, he says, "Submit it to any test you please. I leave it in your hands. Do in the matter what you think is right." That which is honest will bear probing; that which is complete in its morality will bear searching into. Now, this is precisely what the Apostle Paul says to us about religion itself, and about the whole sphere and scope of life:—"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good," and when I stand before you as a Christian teacher, it is not to impose something upon you, but to say, "This is the truth; this is the doctrine which appears to me to be the Divine teaching. I expound, I enforce, I apply. Now that I have done my utmost, you go and prove it for your own selves." Oh! that men were wise that they would consider these things; that they would reason with God and know the meaning of that to which He calls them. And so we read that, "For these four children God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel was understanding in all visions and dreams." I wish you to dwell upon this for one moment to show you that God interposes so as to quicken the intellect, so as to give higher sagacity to the understanding, so as to make a man mentally robuster and stronger. God has jurisdiction in the province of ideas. He can stimulate the brain; He can make us fertile in suggestion; He can quicken and expand our fancy; He can give us intellectual dominion. Religion has never failed to do this. Every religious man is the more intellectual for his religion. He may not be very intellectual even with his Christianity, but he would be less so without his faith in God.

Young man, believe me, if you lack wisdom, ask of God. He giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not. I myself have been just where you are. I know your difficulties and your trials. I have been a boy—a youth exposed to temptations; put in slippery and dangerous places. I know what it is to be short of an idea; to be brought to that pass that I did not know what my next step in life was to be. All my counsellors have been struck dumb, my advisers have abandoned me on the right hand and on the left, and I have not known what to do, and in that extremity I have said to God,

evil is not in being rich, but in being proud, haughty, self-sufficient. Young man, let me ask your attention to this one point. You have the king's bread, you have the king's wine, but you are in captivity, and don't be deluded, blindfolded by secondary advantages, by relative privileges, when down under all things is the grim, terrible fact that you are a slave. What is it though a man have a fine board, and a fine house, and fine surroundings, if his soul be in captivity, if he be less a man than he is a slave. Who can make us free? Jesus Christ. "If ye know the truth, the truth shall make you free. If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." The liberty of the sons of God is a glorious liberty. I invite you to the cross, that you may become bondsmen of the Son of God. I invite you to the slavery of love. I ask you to become prisoners of Jesus Christ; slaves and servants of Him, who, "though in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a slave and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." To be His slave is to be a freeman for ever.





REV. ARTHUR MURSELL.

SCHOOL LIFE.

A DISCOURSE,

By ARTHUR MURSELL.

Delivered at London (Stockwell), February 1st, 1874.

“Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not go ; keep her ; for she is thy life.”—Proverbs iv. 13.

WHEN we put school-life and holidays in contrast it is generally implied that there is something about the former which is dull, and gloomy, and severe. But this does not of necessity follow. The mind and the body work inversely ; we rest the one to work the other. A man sits down to study, reposing the body to exercise the mind. When he would rest the mind he exerts the body. So that school-life gives an appetite for holiday, and holiday gives relish to school-life. Both, when used and not abused, are good, and healthily help each other. The race, or the game, or the exercise is not an evil because it makes us hungry, but rather good because it makes the meal enjoyable ; but it were better let alone if there were no meal to follow, since it would but create the craving which was not to be satisfied. And so holiday without school-life would be a mistake, and school-life without holiday would be a slavery. In itself school-life is not only a necessity but a pleasure. A cultivated taste will enjoy the process of cultivation ; a healthy ambition will delight in the intellectual athletics of competition ; and a contemplative soul will draw sweetness from the communion and reverie which literature creates. There is a charm in the tension, just as there is a joy in the relaxation. Moreover, the school *régime* of modern days is milder than of yore. The moral suasion of to-day contrasts strongly with the tales of a coercive force which older pupils tell. Children, and those of firmer adolescence, speak with affec-

tion of preceptors and preceptresses, as the rule of love is superseding that of force. But, with all this, the essential elements of school-life are law, discipline, authority. It is the task-time of our experience. Those who are just now packing up to re-confront the lesson, and the ordered routine, feel it so. School-life comes up before them in its contrast with home-life. Which of us cannot recall the day we first left home for school? It may be that you left for a term of months, to board away from home. It may be that you went but for the day, to come back in the evening. In either case, in its degree, it was one of life's first solid trials. It looks little now to the man whose back and heart have ached with so much heavier burdens; but I question if there are not many here who can recall their first school-day, as the day of the first real wrench, and first deep strangeness of their whole life. Of course this feeling would be regulated by the sharpness of the degree in which the school and home-life would contrast. Those who only left a motherless home, or a home where distance and rigour had reigned and made an arctic atmosphere; who only left stern faces behind them, and pressed no tender hand in their adieux, will not be able to appreciate the contrast. Their school-life had already been begun at home. But those who heard a smothered sigh precede the order for the early morning call, that the train might not be lost, and haply saw a tear fall into the box ere it was locked and corded; those who found the little Bible in the trunk with many a loving passage underlined, and perhaps a sister's lock of hair between the leaves; who wore no garment which did not bear the trace of fingers nimble with the nameless energy of love: in short, those who left a *home* behind them, like a temple, hung with the glistening lamps of sisterly eyes, and fragrant with the incense of a mother's prayers:—these know that the first day of school-life was a day of sadness. The strangeness of the fresh place, the

boisterous spirits of the more seasoned pupils, who are shaking off the memory of home-partings in the affected energy of their greetings to each other, and their loud reminiscences of holiday conquests and exploits ; the sense of isolation, almost like bereavement, which comes over you, and the vain feeling for that hand which cannot touch, and listening for the voice which cannot speak, and looking for the face which cannot smile ; all this, with the effort to call up the courage and to play the man, makes the position of the "new boy" one which he will remember even when he has grown into an old man, and one which the delicate kindness of no preceptor ever yet succeeded in thawing of its rigour or softening of its pang of heart-ache. Our first school-day is our first day of real discipline : the day on which (however kindly it be ushered in) the first stripe of life's lash comes cutting on our backs. Smiles may be around us, and hearty words may greet us, but we are under the rod, and we feel it, though we see no hand that wields it and hear no voice that bids us bend. A sense of *duty* now takes the place of that of *dependence*. A principle of honour stirs up emulation, and the dread of discipline checks the spasm of insubordination. We are in harness for the first time, having our own load to draw, and it soon becomes our wisdom and our study to draw steadily, lest the harness gall us, or the whip remind us. Such is school-life. Might we not as well say, such is *life*. We have spoken but literally of school as contrasted with home. But the school-life of our boyhood is holiday compared with manhood's schooling. Let us take a further contrast, and speak to a more matured experience. Don't you remember how you envied your elder brother when he was promoted to the older garment, and how you despised your childhood's frills and tuckers as you compared them with his more grown-up garb ? And yet, when your turn came you laid the little coats away with something like a sigh, and felt but stiff and strange in the

new kickshaws. Don't you remember how the same jealousy followed that brother to boarding-school, and how you grew impatient with the gentle teachers and the simpler lessons of home? Yet, when you went to school, a something came up into your throat, not once or twice, but many times, which you had hard work to swallow down, and whose smothering left a tear upon a wakeful pillow when others were asleep, as the blood upon a silent battle-field. And don't you remember how, when your voice began to break, and you had grown tall, and haughty to your juniors, and easily familiar with the usher, it used to be whispered round the little class whose lesson was entrusted sometimes to your supervision that "Smith would soon leave school," and how proud you felt to think it was your last *half*, and spoke to the young ones in a deep bass voice to impress them with your dignity? But when the day came for you to dwindle from a senior pupil to a junior clerk, you did not quit the old scenes of your importance without "a longing, lingering look behind," without a yearning after that past homage of the schoolroom, and a fond remembrance of the cricket-field, where the shrill cheers greeted the "swipe" out of the ground, the memorable "sixer" with which you won the match against the other school. All the old embarrassments have to begin again at each promotion, and we rise by heart-aches on a ladder of old regrets. Each new ambition crushes a gathered flower, and gives sadness to an old memory. Childhood thirsts for manhood. But O, with how much more vivid thoughts to prompt the wish does manhood often yearn after the school, the home, the nursery, so long passed through!

"O, when I was a tiny boy,
My days and nights were full of joy,
My mates were blythe and kind.
What wonder that I sometimes sigh,
And dash the tear-drop from my eye,
To cast a look behind!"

We come into the real school-life when we have left school. We wanted to leave school that we might please ourselves, and be our own masters. Save the mark ! Our own masters ! Why, who is his own master ? Ask any man of commerce, or of literature, or of public walk, if he is his own master. The more he seems to be so the more he is a slave. Slave to his own ambition, slave to the fashion of his craft, slave to society's demands, slave to the greed of others, slave to an hundred exigencies of station and position, which makes him more of a hack than ever, and life a more inexorable school. It is a school without any holidays, where the tasks are harder and the discipline is sterner. The ferule is oftener than ever on his knuckles, the impositions are longer and more irksome, and the lessons more imperative. Failure is fall, and success is but the list of further tasks. We are at school still ; and the school in which we find ourselves to-day is the school of *duty*. The week through which we are passing (of whose gateway this Sabbath is the key) will bring to each of us our duty. Duty is twofold. Duty to do, duty to endure. We have the tasks of the school to do, and the discipline of the school to bear. And the more honest we are in the first, the braver shall we be for the second. We have duties to perform. There are some whose duty is conscribed within the home-circle. It may consist of the common round of domestic work, to direct a household, to rule a nursery, to superintend a kitchen. "How humble ! how obscure ! how mean !" says pride. No, it is not mean ; it is divine. True pride will not fret so much to enlarge its sphere, as to adorn the sphere it fills, by doing its duty well within it. The servant who does the day's work honestly, the mistress who rules her household wisely, is doing truer work and offering nobler service than the king who governs as a tyrant, or the judge who holds unequal scales. Not what you do, but how you do it, is the test. And small things done as to the Lord

and not to men, grow golden and precious with the stamp of honest stewardship. A task shuffled, or a trust abused, shall be a stigma, no less in the little than the great, while principle carried into the interstices and details of daily duty, shall make the whole life to shine like a lamp that burneth. Let us apply this rule alike to our commerce and our citizenship. If we would scorn to be dishonest in the one, let us be equally scrupulous in the other. A trust becomes a right in proportion as it is rightly used. In the exercise of responsibility which awaits many of us this week,* we have to deal with questions, not with persons, with measures, not with men, with issues, not with friendships. If my brother asks my help to power because he *is* my brother, I am bound to say, "That is no claim; I must know how you will use that power; if in the cause of human freedom, civil and religious, if in the striking off of fetters from limbs or consciences; if in the high interests of progress and of faith, then for these interests, and not because you are my brother, you shall have my aid; but if you go to plot against the integrity of the empire on the one hand, and its freedom on the other; if you go to maintain inequality in religious life and thought and action; if you go to retard those liberties for which our fathers bled, and postpone that religious emancipation for which the growing freedom and intellect of the time aspires; if you go to parley for a longer lease of priestcraft from any church in England or in Rome, then, brother though you be, my dearest foe, my deadliest enemy, shall go before you, so long as he carries freedom's banner in his hand." Brethren, these are struggles of principle, and as such every honest man is bound to treat them. It is sad to see a levity coming over men in these days, which is no heritage from our fathers, and to hear them lightly dallying with the sacred trust of citizenship as if it were a straw to be tossed into the air to be carried at the caprice of any wind which catches it. If it is criminal in

* Preached just prior to the General Election.

the poor man to sell his suffrage to the highest bidder of gold, it is criminal in the rich man to sell his to friendship or caprice. If you have no principles, you have no moral right to vote, because you have no trust to keep or to betray. But if you have a judgment and a conscience, the one to see and the other to speak, you are bound by all the ties of honesty and of Christianity to carry both into the political section of your life. May He in whose hands are freedom's issues, and whose kingdom is not of this world, guide you in the exercise of this sacred trust, reminding you that not England only, but the God of England, of her liberties, and of her people, expects every man to do his duty. If the cause of Freedom's battle, bequeathed from our sires to ourselves, is baffled or postponed to-day, let it not be through our apathy, or because we had not sense to understand, loyalty to inherit, or courage to maintain the principles of religious liberty we are challenged to defend.

Our manhood is truly developed only as we make life real, and we only make life real in proportion as we take each duty, great or small, and make it great by principle, and sacred because we do it unto God.

Nor are these duties of our school-life restricted by the bounds of our activities ; they enter into the region of endurance, and challenge patience as well as principle ; the fortitude which can bear as well as the courage that can achieve. There is a good deal of bearing involved in the ordinary routine of doing, but even when we cannot carry the yoke into the energetic task-time, there is room for Christian duty. Character is tested as much or more by the meekness with which the discipline is borne, as by the energy with which the task is done. It is sometimes impossible to separate the doing and the daring from the suffering and bearing. How intimate was their blending in that lion-heart over the throbbing of whose last pulse civilization holds her breath, unwilling to believe that it is stilled for ever. As fancy bears us to that African jungle, making us drop upon our knee beside the impassive load the black but faithful hands of savages are reverently bearing towards our shores, holding the feather of a trembling hope to the set lips if haply it may stir with signs of life ; we are lost in wonder as we confess the truth that Livingstone is gone in-

deed, at the vast quantity of life that has been wrought out of that fallen temple, and puzzled to determine whether it was grandest in the heights it scaled, or in the weights it bore. Not only in disdain of danger, not only in buoyant hopefulness ; not alone in giant undertaking, and in superb achievement ; not alone in patient bearing of fatigue, and in contempt of pain, but in the constant self-repression of his life which ever lost the thought of self in the lustre of his work and object, was the secret glory of this hero-life. It is a splendid monument of duty in its bigness and its breadth, duty in action, and duty in the patience of its vigil. Not for reward, but work ; not for applause, but for humanity ; not to accumulate the garlands of popular ovation, but to do his Master's bidding, and fill a new world with His truth, did this soldier fight and fall. When the swamp amidst whose damps he fell shall be green under the plough-share, and flecked with thriving villages whose streets shall hum with handicraft, and chime with Sabbath bells ; whose schools shall swarm with sable children keen at the industries of noble study and deft at the chivalries of polished art ; and round whose firesides the Bible shall be read, and the incense from the altars of the sons of Ham shall blend with the offerings of Japhet and of Shem : then shall *his* name be softly whispered who bore the torch of life into that jungle ; then shall old sires bare their heads of snowy wool to speak of the Christian missionary who turned the waste into a garden, and made the desert blossom as the rose ; and then shall black mothers make their children's hearts beat high, at the story of the brave white man who bore the torch of truth across their barren acres, till the myrtle-tree outgrew the thorn, and the fir-tree overtopped the briar ; how he stood like a hero with the Gospel in his heart, and fell like a champion with Christ upon his lips.

Brethren, the noblest wreath which we can lay on such a breast is imitation. Our sighs of homage will soon die away, our tear of love will dry up in to-morrow's heat ; it will fall but as the dewdrop of the morning to be drunk up by the noonday sun ; but the flower of emulation shall endure ; that shall not fade, but shall live in honest effort and grow beautiful and fragrant with Christian patience. Nor does this restrict the homage to a few. It appeals to

the servant at her work, to the peasant at his toil, to the drudge at his obscurest task, as well as to the scholar on his field of thought, and the soldier on his field of battle. All may be fields of glory, although men's bravos may not cheer them, if they but bear the footprints of an honest consecration, and are made the oratories of silent prayer. The glory that shall gild them shall be God's smile. Not in the romance that wakes the poet's lyre, or the adventure that upstirs a nation's wonder, and the brunt that kindles man's acclaim, is true life only to be shown, and noble guerdon to be won ; but in the constancy which carries principle along each quiet path of duty, doing the unnoticed deed for Christ's sake only, and carrying the load to the grave's brink through weal or woe in His one Name. Be thou faithful ; not heroic but faithful ; not great but faithful ; not mighty but faithful ; faithful in that kitchen where you serve, faithful in that household where you rule, faithful to those children whom you guide, faithful in that shop, that office, at that work-bench where you toil, faithful to that trust of citizenship you wield, faithful in great and small : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Yes, it is in the bearing of the discipline of school-life as well as in accomplishing its tasks, that there is scope for Christian nobleness. So that you who have silent sorrows gnawing at your hearts are not shut out, but pressed into the chivalrous conscription ; you whose post is that of watcher by the fevered bed, or of mourner by the empty chair, are specially enrolled into the soldierly enlistment. Go home and tell the sister who has long lain panting on the couch, that her chamber is a battle-field where she may win spurs of glory, by suffering meekly in her Saviour's name. There is a chieftainship in brave endurance which wins its laurel and reward. As warriors and martyrs have been glorious in death, wrapping the mantle round their forms that they may fall with dignity and grace ; so may each lowly sufferer of common life bend down so gracefully beneath a Father's rod as to make suffering beautiful, and the death-bed of their gentle patience shall be glorious as the western sky when the sun spreads regal purple on the landscape as he sets. Not with the Stoic's studied tension of contempt ; nor with philosophy's cold courage, which simply stifles

natural horror, and receives cold death at the bayonet point of its own creedless nothingness, seeking to hoist the monster with his own petard, is life's great crisis to be faced ; but with the Christian's cheerful patience, which waits for strong arms to lift him into higher life, which views the very grave fringed with the promises, like violets of spring, and golden with the brightness of the lamp of love which Christ has hung up in its vault. Philosophy may brave out death, and make the sufferer seem to be a conqueror. But only Christ can cancel it, and make him more than conqueror. They talk of evolution ; will that destroy death's powers over me, or make me quake the less at the fiat, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee" ? Will it be any reassurance to be told that I shall pass away into something else, when the tabernacle of my flesh has fallen ? Whatever legacy to other life this crumbling frame may be, *I* shall not become anything but myself. They tell us that seven years suffices to unbuild a human body and reclothe us with another. What is it to me what that which I have put away is now ? The particles of which I was built seven or fourteen or twenty-one years ago may have become butterflies or serpents, or birds, or flowers, or any other form of life you please, and my body after death may build up lives yet to come ; but what is that to me ? That is evolution, and it may be true or a lie. But it is no lie that my soul shall be required of me, and that I shall require and find my soul when the resurrection call shall wake me from my grave ; and so it is to Christ that I commit that soul, because it is everything to me that it be found in Him. O suffer and die as well as work and live in Christ, who worked and lived, suffered and died for you. And in the discipline of the school life, when the rod is smart and the cross is heavy, be a pupil, not a philosopher, be a child, not a senior wrangler. Don't criticise but trust ; don't call it law but love ; take it as a Father's chastisement, or as the struggle from the Master's school into the Father's home again. You want sympathy ? Take it !

"Child of my love, *lean hard,*

And let Me feel the pressure of thy care.

I know thy burden, child, I shaped it,

Poised it in my own hand, made no proportion

In its weight to your unaided strength.

Before I ever laid it on I said
 'I shall be ever near, and while she leans on Me
 This burden shall be mine, not her's.'
 So shall I keep my child within the circling arms
 Of my own love. There lay it down, nor fear
 To impose it on a shoulder which upholds
 The government of worlds. Yes. Closer come.
Thou art not near enough. I would embrace thy care,
 So I might feel my child reposing on my heart.
 Thou lovest Me? I doubt it not.
 Then, loving Me, *lean hard.*"

It is well to contrast school life with home life, and business life with school days, and school days with holidays, and so on; but it is better to compare earth life with heaven life, making earth the term and heaven the eternal holiday, duty the task and principle the master, service the lesson and suffering the discipline; not God the chastener, but sin the chastener, and Christ the Healer and God the Father, and God's heaven the everlasting home, and God's love the everlasting joy. If God does give a cross it is a love-token, heavy though it may be. It is well to take it as from Him. He does not willingly afflict or grieve; but let Him be the Master of the school, and its discipline shall be life. If one who was sinless gave His back to the smiters, smiters so fierce and pitiless, and did not strive or cry, shall not our sinful backs be meekly bent to a chastisement so just and gentle, where the Master and the Healer are the same. Kiss the rod, for it buds with pity even while it smites.

"I sat in the school of sorrow:
 The Master was teaching me there,
 But my eyes were dim with weeping,
 And my heart was full of care.

Instead of looking upward
 And seeing His face Divine,
 So full of tender pity
 For weary hearts like mine—

I only thought of the burden,
 The cross that before me lay,
 So hard and heavy to carry,
 It darkened the light of day.

So I would not learn my lesson
And say, 'Thy will be done,'
And the Master came not near me,
As the weary hours went on.

At last from my weary sorrow
I looked from the cross, above,
And I saw the Master watching,
With a glance of tender love.

He turned to the cross before me,
And I thought I heard him say—
'My child, thou must bear thy burden,
And learn thy task to-day.

I may not tell the reason,
'Tis enough for thee to know
That I the Master am teaching,
And give this cup of woe.'

So I stooped to that weary sorrow;
One look at His face Divine
Had given me power to trust Him,
And say, 'Thy will, not mine.'

And then I learned my lesson,
Taught by the Master alone;
He only knows the tears I shed,
For He has wept His own.

But from them came a brightness
Straight from His home above,
Where the school of life will be ended,
And the cross will show the love."

Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His Father's glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Father, be ascribed, as is most due, all glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.





REV. CHARLES GARRETT.

THE ACCEPTED CALL.

A SERMON.

By REV. CHARLES GARRETT.

Preached at Rydal Mount Chapel, Manchester, Sunday, March 15th, 1874.

“When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee,
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”—Ps. xxvii. 8.

THE question is often asked, How do men become the sons of God? Sometimes this question is asked sneeringly by those who do not believe in the possibility of such a transformation. Sometimes it is asked earnestly and anxiously by those who believe it possible that humanity may be so honoured, but who are bewildered as to the way in which that honour is to be obtained. They have said, “We started together, and have gone shoulder to shoulder for twenty or may be fifty years, and now there is a difference between us as wide as heaven and hell. How has this marvellous change in you been effected?” and I have replied, “Don’t ask me, because I may be an impostor; go to some one of whose conversion it is impossible to doubt, and remember that when you have obtained an answer from one child of God you have in substance received an answer from all.” And so to-day I take you to David. Here there can be no mistake. We know that he was a sinner by nature, for he says he was “conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity.” We know that he was a sinner by actual transgression, for his history is stained with records of the vilest iniquity; and we also know that he afterwards became a man after God’s own heart, and has been made the leader of the Church’s praise to the end of time. I ask you to listen to his own account of the way in which the great change was effected. It is brief, but full—so full that we may learn from it the way of salvation. He says, “When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” That is, God spoke, and I heard Him. God called me, and I came to Him. God held out His arms, and I ran into them. “Why,” many of you are saying, “this is just my experience.” I know it is: I care not whether you are a

Methodist, a Baptist, a Churchman, or a Nonconformist, a Protestant or a Catholic ; if you are a child of God, my text is your spiritual history. God's family is one, though we are called by many names, and when it comes to matters of experience our unity is at once made manifest.

The text naturally divides itself into two parts. We have first, *God's address to man*; secondly, *Man's reply to God*.

First, *we have God's address to man*—"Thou saidst, Seek ye my face." Here we have the *origin* of all true religion. It begins with God. It was so at the outset. All who know anything about quarrels among men know that as a rule the offended party is generally the first to seek a reconciliation, and it may well be so, for when a man knows he is in the right he can afford to be generous—to hold out his hand, and say as Abraham did to Lot, "Let there be no quarrel between thy herdsmen and mine." But whether this be true of the quarrels among men or not, it is gloriously true of the great quarrel between God and man. Man sinned, and God was angry with man. Did He however wait for man to draw near to Him with a broken and contrite heart and ask for pardon? Did He wait for man to come and confess his ingratitude and sinfulness? We know He did not. We know that if He had, our reconciliation would never have taken place, but the whole family of man would have moved on in one dark blaspheming procession to perdition. God knew this, knew it well, and "because He delighteth in mercy" He spoke first.

And has it struck you how soon He spoke? Did He wait till man had learnt by years of bitter experience the sinfulness of his sin? No, He did not. Blessed be His Name! the first day of man's sin was the first day of God's revelation of mercy! He who has commanded us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath acted upon His own command, and before the end of the first day of man's transgression He went to him, and while showing him his sinfulness and its sad results, proclaimed to him the glorious news of salvation. This God spoke first to our race: "the way of peace" is not an invention of man, but a revelation from heaven.

God also speaks first to every individual. I hear many people pray as if man was ready to be reconciled and God was not. This is an immense and God-dishonouring error. Does He not say, "I stand at the door and knock"? Does He not declare that He has been there till His locks are wet with the dew of the morning? He is ever ready to receive us; and the moment the sinner draws back the bars and bolts which have kept the door shut in His face "the King of glory will come in." Yes,—

"He now stands knocking at the door
Of every sinner's heart;
The worst need keep Him out no more,
Nor force Him to depart."

Do I hear some one saying, "But does God really speak to man? Can there be this direct intercourse between Him and us?" I answer, "Yes, He can and does." Cannot we speak to our children? Cannot the sheep on the hill-side speak to their little leaping lambs, Cannot the parent bird speak to her little open-mouthed young ones? And is God the only dumb parent in the universe? He that made the tongue can He not speak? He does speak all day long. He speaks sometimes in tones of thunder, which are like the beginning of hell to the guilty soul, and sometimes in tones soft as a mother's blessing, which fill the eyes with tears we know not how.

Do I hear some one saying, "But I have never heard Him"? Perhaps not; that however may not be because He has not spoken.

I shall never forget my first visit to a woollen mill. The noise of the machinery stunned and bewildered me. The owner of the mill explained the various processes as we went on, but it was a dumb show to me—I heard nothing. Suppose when I came out I had been asked whether the gentleman spoke to me during my visit, and I had replied "No," would it have been true? Certainly not; he spoke, but I did not hear. His voice was drowned in the surrounding noise. And so it is with thousands of those around us. God speaks to them, but His voice is drowned in the

hubbub by which they are surrounded. They are awakened in the morning by the postman's knock, and before they have time for a thought about God or eternity, the noise of their own mill is all around them ; before the letters are finished the morning paper arrives, and the roar of the world is added to the sound which already existed ; a short prayer is uttered, a hasty meal swallowed, and henceforth it is whirl and excitement till the evening ; they return home worn out and weary, by the aid of stimulants they are able to spend an evening of worldly pleasure, and then a short psalm and a shorter prayer is read, and they retire to a troubled rest to be awakened again by the postman's knock, and to go through the same distracting round. This is the history year in and year out of thousands around us—and how can God's voice ever be heard in this whirl ? There will however come an end to this. While I was in that mill the dinner hour came, and instantly the machinery stopped, and out of the silence came a hundred voices that had been speaking before, but had been drowned in the noise. And so it will be with us. This life is not to go on for ever. There will come a morning when other hands will open the letters, when the newsman will be told that the paper is needed no more, when there will be sorrow and silence in the now busy home. The noise of time will be unheard : there will be the silence of eternity, and, if we neglect the offer of mercy, out of that silence will come a voice louder than thunder which will say, " Because I have called, and ye refused ; because I have stretched forth my hands, and you would have none of my reproof, I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."

The text also shows us the *nature* of religion. When God speaks to man, what does He say ? The text says, " Seek ye my face." Do you ask, What does this mean ? It means just this, " Come to Me." This is what God says to every man, not just " Come to My House, or My Book, or My Servant," but " Come to *Me*." When God says this, do not the words imply that we are at a distance from Him ?

Some one may say, But how can this be ? Do we not live

and move in God? How then can we be far from Him? How? Suppose you meet an old friend, and at once go up to him to express your pleasure at the meeting, and he receives you coldly, and passes on, would you not say you met so and so, and he was so *distant*—you *met* him, and yet he was *distant*? What do you mean by that? You mean that your bodies met, but that there was no union of heart, and that is what God means when He speaks to us. He says we draw near to Him with our lips, but our hearts are far off. Now it is the heart that God wants, and to offer Him any substitute is an insult.

But does not God teach us further by this passage, that though we are afar off we need not stay there? When He says, "Come to Me," does not that imply that there is a possibility of our coming? If there were no such possibility, the invitation would be a mockery. I know that when Adam was driven out of Paradise, the fiery sword was placed there to prevent his return. But there is a beautiful passage in the ninth chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews which says, "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." There is a world of comfort for the trembling heart in this. But what does it mean? It is clear that it does not mean that He has put away sin as a fact, for it meets us everywhere. Nor does it mean that He has put it away as a thing to be punished. Many of you feel something of its punishment even now. Does it not mean that it is put away as the legal obstacle to man's salvation? Yes, thank God! it does. There is no fiery sword now to keep us back from God. That sword was quenched, and instead of the sword of vengeance, the sceptre of mercy is held out to the trembling penitent that he may touch it and live for ever. True religion then is not form, or ceremony, or creed, or anything of that sort; it is something infinitely higher—it is the heart coming back to God.

Everything else instead of this is a hollow mockery—a refuge of lies. This then is religion—the heart coming back to God. That is the first part of the subject, and before I go any further I stop to ask whether you can go so far. I beseech you do not shirk the question, Has your heart come

back to God? It is a matter between you and Him: His heart has come back to you; but has your heart come back to Him? Can you

“ Say by grace restored,
Now Thou knowest I love Thee, Lord ”?

If you can, all is well; for you “to live is Christ, and to die will be gain;” but if not, and you remain as you are, you will be miserable in time, and lost in eternity.

Secondly, *we have man's reply to God.* God said to David, “Seek ye My face,” and the reply of the Psalmist was, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” The answer was therefore personal. There is great danger in this age of companies of our losing ourselves in the firm of humanity. But our spiritual affairs must all be done individually: we have in this sense to live alone, as we shall have to die alone, and to stand alone before the judgment-seat. You find out man's isolation when you stand, as most of us have stood in the solemn death-chamber. How lonely the soul seems then! You remember when you stood in that quiet bedroom and saw the father, or mother, or wife, or husband, or child go out alone. You could but watch and weep; your heart was breaking, and you longed to go with them; but your loved ones went out alone to meet their God. You and I shall have to die soon. There will be weeping eyes and anxious, broken hearts; but we shall die alone—one last lingering look, and then we shall go alone into the tremendous realities of eternity. Just so must we try and live alone. God speaks to each as though there were no other being in the Universe, and says, “Come to Me.” And each of us should answer as if there were no other, “By Thy grace I will arise and come.”

The answer of David was not only personal; it was prompt. *When* thou saidst. There was no talk about to-morrow or next day. The devil's policy is to cheat us out of the present. His suggestion is, any time but the present for a good deed; no time but the present for a bad one. He never talks to you of putting off sin, but he often talks of putting off prayers and conversion. He never speaks to

you about sinning to-morrow. No ; sin to-night, and repent to-morrow ; that is the devil's policy. David knew this, and when the Lord said, "Seek ye My face," the decision was at once made—"Thy face, Lord, will I seek." And so it should be with each of us. Procrastination is full of danger. Every time we reject the offer of mercy we increase the probability that we shall never accept it. I was staying one night with an old gentleman, and when the company was gone, and we were alone, I said, "Are you on the road to heaven, sir?" With a quivering lip, he said, "No, I fear I am not." I said, "Why, that is a very terrible thing. You have been connected with the Church for many years?" "All my life," said he ; "My house has been the preacher's home for more than thirty years, and none have been more welcome." I said, "It is a terrible thing to love the servants, and not to love the Master." "That has just been my case," was the reply. I said, "But has not the Holy Spirit striven with you?" "Oh, it is not God's fault that I am as I am," was the answer, "it is all my own ; I recollect well, when an apprentice, the Spirit strove with me, and I put Him off till I was out of my apprenticeship. When that time came, He strove with me again, but I determined to wait until I should be my own master. When I entered into business I was again troubled about my soul, but then came the thought—I have so much to think about now ; when I have made a fortune I will retire from business, and the rest of my days I will live for God." I said, "Well, you have made a fortune, and have retired ; how is it with you now?" And the tears ran down his cheeks as he replied, "It is harder work now than ever." I would ask, is not that the history of many whom you have known? They never intended to go to hell ; they always intended to do better, but all the time they permitted difficulties to increase until now, with grey hairs upon their heads, they are standing on the brink of perdition.

David was prompt in his decision. "When thou saidst, Seek ye My face ; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Oh, follow his example. Now is the day of salvation. Now heaven's gates are open ; now the Gospel message is proclaimed ; now the High Priest is pleading ;

now the Spirit is striving ; now the Church is working ; “all things are now ready ;” it is God’s time. To-morrow the sceptre may be turned into a sword ; to-morrow the door may be shut ; to-morrow your doom may be sealed ; to-morrow instead of an open heaven there may be a yawning hell. Let there be no talk of to-morrow, but say to-day : “I will arise and go to my Father.”

Then, the answer of David was also decided : “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” Many people are content with thinking about religion. I know persons who have been talking about religion for the last twenty years, but who have not got a step further yet. They have always been thinking about joining themselves to God’s people, and the devil has been laughing at them all the time. We must act, as well as think. Thinking about heaven will never take a man there. “When thou saidst, Seek ye My face ; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek ” —“I will do it.” And there is no presumption in that decision. It is not presumption to say “I will,” if God calls me. There is nothing Pharisaical in that. If God calls me He does “with the word the power convey,” and though the devil, and the world, and the flesh are strong, God is stronger. He is now in our midst waiting to help you. Look up and say, “Lord, I will—happy or miserable—whether men bless or curse—whether it takes me to a palace or a workhouse, I make no conditions, I will seek Thy face.” You will have to do it, if you are ever to get to heaven. Don’t try to make any bargain with God, but say,

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul from one dark blot,
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O, Lamb of God, I come.”

“I will seek Thy face.”

Again, this answer was explicit. It was, indeed, what one of our hymns calls an echo of what God had said before. God said, “Seek ye My face ;” the heart says, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek”—that is, I mean just what God means, and I do not mean anything else. People go to churches and chapels, and all the while remain unconverted because

they mean something different from God. They hide in a refuge of lies ; they want to compound with God. He will never agree to that ; if you are ever to be saved you will have to be saved in God's way and on God's terms. David says, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek"—I mean what God means. If you had done the same you would have found peace long ago. But you have not. God has said, "Come to Me," and you have heard and have been troubled, and have said, "I will turn over a new leaf." God has said, "Come to Me," and you have said, "I will sign the pledge." God has said, "Come to Me," and you have said, "I will take a seat at chapel." God has said, "Come to Me," and you have said, "I will meet in class." God has said, "Come to Me," and you have said, "I will receive the Lord's Supper." But do you not see that all these may be refuges of lies ? It is all very well to turn over a new leaf—the old one is blurred and blotted enough, God knows ? It is all right to sign the pledge. It is all right to take a seat in chapel, to meet in class, and to kneel at the sacramental table ; but it is all wrong if put as a substitute for coming to God. These thou shouldest have done, and not have left the other undone. If you have turned over a new leaf, God help you to keep it turned over ; if you have signed the pledge, may He help you to be faithful ; if you have taken a seat in the house of God, may He give you grace often, nay, always to be there ; if you have decided to go to class, may it prove a blessing to your soul ; if you come to the Lord's table, may you always meet the Lord there. But when you have done all these things you must remember that they are no substitute for your coming to God. I was going round a chapel one night during a prayer-meeting, and meeting with a lady who was in much distress, I said, "My sister, are you not saved ?" She said, "No, sir ; I have been a member of a church for years, but not a member of Christ's mystical body. I have not been converted ; I have not enjoyed the forgiveness of sins." "It is a sad thing," I said, "to be so long connected with the Church and not to have enjoyed the sunshine of God's smile." She said, "It is, and I cannot rest without it." Now I do not like putting a test upon people which is not directly taught in the Bible ; but I knew this lady

was of a proud disposition, and I said, "Are you willing to go up and kneel with those persons at the communion who are seeking mercy?" There was a moment's hesitancy, and then, lifting up her face, which was pale with excitement, she said, "I am willing to do anything if I may but find mercy." She went and threw herself upon her knees and within five minutes I saw her raise her face—bright almost as an angel's; I went to her, and she exclaimed, "I am saved, I am saved. O, blessed be God, my sins which were many are all forgiven." Brother, sister, it shall be so with thee if thou wilt but thus come to Christ to-night.

Lastly, the answer came from the right place. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face;" my *lips*?—no, no, the lips are too often liars, but the heart never is—"my *heart* said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." David did not stand up and say, "I will arise and go to my Father," while his heart was alienated and his life in rebellion. The lips, perhaps, were silent, but the heart responded, Yes. Religion is heart-work:—

"Words may come forth with eloquence
And claim the world's applause,
Which yet may never rise from thence
To the sky that o'er us glows.
But word, or look, or thought, which from the heart doth rise,
Like incense up to heaven shall float, a welcome sacrifice."

What the heart says God always hears. It is said of a Greek musician that his touch was so delicate and his ear so quick that he would often play a tune on his harp which only his own quick ear could catch. Whether fact or fable, this affords a beautiful illustration of God's intercourse with man's heart. When God speaks to the heart He always gets a reply. You hear me to-night, but I shall not know, perhaps, until the day of judgment what have been the results of this service; but when God comes He always gets an answer. God is coming to you, and is saying. "Give me thy heart." O, make thy heart stop to listen to Him. God says "Come to Me." That is not hard, is it? Yet do it, if it be hard. Let your heart reply and God will hear. He is listening—His ear is at your heart at this moment. Perhaps there is some young

man here who is saying, "I will come to God. I have often thought about it, but I will do it, by the help of the Holy Spirit." If so, He hears, and will help. I was sitting one night with a farmer who said to me, "I was very happy and very miserable last night." "That is very strange," I answered. "I was," he said; "when one after another went up to seek for mercy my heart danced for joy; but when I thought of my own children, not one of whom is yet converted, I felt as if my heart would break, I thought everybody's children were being saved but mine." One of his daughters, who was married to a neighbouring farmer, was present, and, turning towards him with a face beaming with happiness, she said, "Then you did not know what my heart said, for last night I made up my mind that your people should be my people, and your God my God." Ah, there was a father sitting in that square pew and saying, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought;" and there was the great Father up yonder saying, "Bring out the best robe, and put it upon her, and let us rejoice and be glad." There is that father saying to-night, "O, if my son were but saved." Yes, young man, and the best news you could send home would be that you had given your heart to God. In the name of your mother—in the name of your father—in the name of those who have gone to heaven, and who are perhaps even now bending over you, I pray you to be reconciled to God. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

And will you not accept the invitation? Christ, who sought you with his own blood, asks you to come to Him. He says to you, "Give me thine heart." May each of you do so this night. I put the question the other day in a village service, "Who is there here that will give his heart to God?" And a little girl, with a voice trembling with emotion, said, "Please, Sir, I will." I do not ask you to respond in a similar way, though I should not be sorry to hear such an answer. But let the Word be spoken by the heart—let God hear it—"I will." He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh the door shall be opened. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." God has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye

Me in vain. There are no hearts too dark, too hard, too foul, too guilty to be saved. And now, brother, standing between thee and hell, I ask thee, wilt thou be reconciled to God? O! by that life of sorrow which he lived, by that death of agony which he endured for thee, I beseech thee, decide to-night. We shall never all meet again on earth. I look around upon your faces, and I shall not see many of them again till we meet before the judgment bar. There will be no opportunity for me to offer mercy to you then, but I do offer it to you now—full, free, present mercy. You

“ May now be saved, whoever will,
This man receiveth sinners still.”

To-night God calls you to himself. O that every soul in this congregation may say, “ Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”



REV. W. BRADEN.

HUMAN ATTAINMENTS AND DIVINE IDEALS.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BRADEN.

Preached at the King's Weigh House Chapel.

"I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."—Psalms cxix. 96.

WHAT is perfection? The question may be answered by employing another word, viz., completeness. When anything is developed to the fullest extent of which its nature is capable, and when it has thoroughly fulfilled the purpose of its existence, then it may truly be described as perfect. As, for instance, when a flower has grown to ripe beauty and can become no more beautiful, so that the next sun-ray or drop of dew will not be sources of nourishment, but helps to its decay; it may then, at that invisible point of its life, be called perfect. So when an animal structure has attained the highest point of vitality, and can be developed in form or strength no further, it has reached perfection—the limit by which its nature is bounded. Now, accepting this definition of perfection, another fact equally obvious—hardly worth mentioning, indeed—is this: that some things reach completeness much sooner than others. Generations of blades of grass grow and pass away while a single oak is reaching maturity. Creatures there are whose life is well called ephemeral; it begins with the dawn and is finished at sun-down, while others enjoy scores of years. If you take the human race, their physical organism reaches perfection at varying periods according to the law

by which they are surrounded, and their own temperament and experiences. After that, decline and decay ensue. But though the physical powers have their limit, you can place no limit to the perfection of the mental or spiritual powers unless you are a believer in the philosophy of materialism. If you accept the teachings of Christianity concerning the soul, you believe that there is a life of infinite progression for the intellect and the heart, perpetual growth in knowledge and character in another world. We therefore hardly dare to speak of any time when we shall have reached the limits of our possible development; for the finite will always be reaching toward the infinite, yet conscious that it has never attained to it. Therefore, I say the law of completeness is according to the nature of the thing or being to be completed.

If, now, we use the word perfection in this sense as meaning the attainment of completeness, the writer would seem to say this: "I have seen that everything has its limits; it grows up to a certain stature, it develops certain qualities, and then comes the end, it finishes its work and can be and do no more. But the Divine law, the truth of God, is not of this character: its boundaries have never yet been reached, it knows nothing of age, of limitations, of decay. Its heights and lengths, its breadths and depths have never yet been fully perceived by man, and assuredly never yet manifested in his life and conduct. There is far more than he has yet understood, far more than he has ever obeyed." Now, putting out of sight all reference to man's immortal development, this utterance of the Psalmist seems most true. Everything we study around us has its limits, a definite completeness is reached, and then comes the end; but Divine truth increases and broadens out as the ages roll on, and like the Infinite mind from which it comes is never exhausted, its life is eternal, its development boundless. If we read the passage thus—and this is one meaning that it will fairly bear—then it reminds us of Isaiah's declaration which is re-echoed by the Apostle Peter when he speaks of the "word of God which liveth" (mark that word "liveth" has in it vital powers for perpetual growth) "which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is grass, and all the

glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

That is one sense in which the text may be accepted. But we may look at it from another aside. The Psalmist says, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Now is there in the first sentence a tone of sorrowful complaint? Does he mean to say, "I can find perfection nowhere. Everything is disappointing, even the best of things is unsatisfactory. I have seen an end of perfection: all that promised to grow to ripeness and completeness never has grown so, but has miserably failed. The only comfort a man can find in the world, the only thing that really answers his expectations and stands forth without delusion, is Divine truth, the law of God"? Ah! there are moods of the heart when man can talk like that and feel it bitterly true. Indeed there are not a few who have taken up the lament of the first sentence, and have said in scorn, "I have seen an end of all perfection," and they have not had the comfort of the other truth on which to rest—"but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." The cynic, who loves to satirize and sneer at his fellow-men, quotes the phrase against human nature when it is striving after nobleness and virtue. Some who have failed in life, who have been beaten down by disappointment, who have lost hope of ever attaining success or happiness, expound their experience to us and say, "We have found an end to all perfection." "Life is all a fleeting show," etc. Those who have been wounded in their friendships, forsaken by those whom they once trusted, and who have awakened from a dream of love to the cold reality of treachery, become hardened against humanity and disbelieve in love. We try to console them, and they cry against us as though we mocked them, "Don't speak any more of love, or friendship, or virtue. Don't paint your ideals of goodness, for we believe in no such thing. We have seen an end of all perfection." And thus they turn their sorrow into a grudge against all their kind. God forbid we should ever take up the words in that terrible and hopeless mood. But I think they ought to be used by reli-

gious men and women in another and truer sense, one that may stimulate to a more earnest upreaching after righteousness, and that will strengthen them in all their resolves for a noble and Christ-like life. I can imagine one saying, "I have seen an end of all perfection"—man's attainments of virtue are at best very limited—"but Thy commandments are exceeding broad": God's law reaches far beyond, and makes provision for a perfection the extent of which no one has yet understood. Therefore I wish to speak more particularly now of Present Attainments and Unfulfilled Demands.

I. Present Attainments.

Few persons, I suppose, will dispute the statement that it is every man's duty to make his nature as complete as possible—to set before himself some ideal of perfection, and to work towards that. He is bound by the fact that he possesses such great faculties, to culture them up to the highest possible point—in other words, he is bound to look outside of himself for some noble standard, and to aim by striving to reach that, and thus make the best of himself. He is responsible to God and his own nature to educate and discipline and perfect that nature as far as in him lies, and by all legitimate means in his power. This principle or law applies to every faculty we possess, mental as well as spiritual. That multitudes never make the attempt must be sadly confessed. You know how many enter upon life with no definite aim for their intellect or heart. They have no ideals. They are content if they fulfil their little round of common duties, if they manage to live comfortably and respectably, but they are without any great ambitions, either for their minds or souls, for this world or the next. A poor, vague, uninfluential, molluscous kind of existence it is; they do no good work in the world, they develop nothing worthy to be called character, they come to the end of their days without having discovered why they were born, they are buried and speedily forgotten by their fellows, and what they will do as they enter upon life in another world it would be folly to attempt to guess.

Surely this description of many a man's and woman's life

is not censorious, but, unhappily, only too true. If they had been plants or animals possessing no mental or spiritual powers to cultivate we might understand and praise them ; but, being what they are, endowed as God has endowed them, with destinies such as He has opened out before them, their existence is as pitiable as it is mysterious. But I repeat, every one ought to have a distinct idea of some great end, of some completeness and perfection towards which he is to press forward, conscious ever that he has "not attained," but striving that he may attain.

I do not stay now to apply this principle to physical or mental development, though they are worthy of your serious consideration, but I wish to put it clearly that having souls capable of growing into the beauty of Divine virtue, capable of becoming Christ-like, we ought to have that object as a clear, constant, unfailing purpose before us. And if every one who is born of God, every one who professes to follow what is called a religious life is inspired by this aim, and labours to attain it, he would reach toward the goal of perfection. This is the characteristic of godly men in every age. Indeed, I believe that there have been among the heathen not a few who have had this ambition. Their knowledge may have been small, their standard of attainments limited, their hopes vague, but they have striven with an almost passionate earnestness to obey the law written in their hearts and interpreted by their consciences, and, like Cornelius, their works have been "in remembrance in the sight of God," since "He is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." Then look at some of the old-world saints among the Jews, how constantly they show the same craving after spiritual completeness. Better circumstanced than the heathen, they had not only the law written in their hearts, but that law confirmed, expounded, and amplified by Divine revelation itself. "God in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets," so that their ideal of perfection was more exalted, more pure, more definite than was possible to the heathen. And their history, their biographies, their literature, show how they struggled against sin and weakness, how they sought to be men after God's

own heart. Even their very confessions of failure, which seem uttered with scalding tear-drops of agony, testify equally with their expressions of desire and hopeful aspiration to this yearning and passion after perfection. You cannot read the Old Testament, whatever be your views of its standard of virtue and godliness, whether you think it high or low, without realizing that in the hearts of the men who are its heroes, there beat a longing, an aspiration, a resolve to reach that standard of perfection which appeared to them the loftiest conception of human life. The word "righteousness" is the key-note of the whole.

Again, if we take another step and speak of men and women under the Christian dispensation, we discover the same characteristics, the same ideal aims ; but the law of perfection here is the most glorious of all. For we have not only the law written in the heart and expounded by prophets, but we have it embodied, manifested, magnified in a life—the Divine life, the Divine character, incarnated, revealed as the pattern and model after which we have to be fashioned—in the person of the God-man, Christ Jesus. He stands forth chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether-lovely, and the definite aim set before us is that we should be like Him. Perfection is not obedience to formal law, but Christ-likeness, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." And I venture to say that there have been and are thousands of earnest souls, whose urgent prayer and effort are to attain that perfection ; they exult when it seems possible, or when they appear to make a step towards it ; they bow confused and humbled when it looks farther away because of their sin. Yet, with all this, with such an ideal and such aspirations, what cause there is to take up the lament of the words, "I have seen an end of all perfection." The results of the struggle do sometimes seem to be very disheartening and full of disappointment. The attainments are exceedingly limited when judged by the expectation. Perfection of life and character, the reproduction of Divine virtue, the manifestation of Jesus Christ's purity, unselfishness, gentleness, seem even among the best of His disciples, if not altogether wanting, yet wondrously deficient. There are times and moods when

this is particularly felt. We look, for instance, upon the Church itself—by which I mean all who have accepted the words of Christ as their law, and His life as their pattern, and I ask are we content, can we be content with the manner in which the generality are to-day proving the reality of their discipleship? Does it look as though they were striving after perfection? That they exhibit many excellencies no one will dispute; but so do their neighbours, who are not inspired by any such purpose. Is there not a wide-spread complacency, a genial satisfaction with their own attainments which is utterly opposed to this spirit of aspiration of which I speak? They have made a profession of religion, they are in the Church, they can take to themselves all glowing, comforting words of promise, and anticipate all the prospects of the future as their portion, but what beyond? Where are the signs that they are seeking completeness, fulness of being? Friends, are there not times when the heart grows sad at the apparent indifference that the Church shows, and is inclined to utter doleful prophecies; to speak as though the Spirit of God, which is always the spirit of aspiration, had forsaken the Church, and to say, as we compare what ought to be with what is, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Take another instance. We often derive our idea of what perfection is from some persons whom we reverence. They stand on a pedestal of noble character above us. All they do looks like an exact imitation of Christ. If only we could become like them, how satisfied we should be. But maybe there comes a time when our idols exhibit defects. We are brought into closer contact and relationship with them, and we are compelled to see faults of temper or selfishness never imagined to exist—we see the limits of their goodness; or perhaps the idols of our admiration suddenly plunge into the very mire of a public sin. The shock that follows none know but ourselves, and then in our misery we cry, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

Or, take another instance. We are disappointed with ourselves. In the flush of new-born love to Christ and warm enthusiasm, we felt as though the conquest of sin were an easy task, as though no cross of suffering or disap-

pointment or loss could bear down our faith, as though self-sacrifice for Christ or for men were the natural and joyous life we could always live; but there came trial, testing, and we failed. Peace, earnestness, love seemed gone; then in bitterness and disgust we have exclaimed against ourselves, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

Now, these facts are not outside of your experience; you have known them—perhaps know them at this hour. Well, what then? To what do they lead? Why, to the conclusion that spiritual life in ourselves and in others is very limited—our attainments are far, far below our ideal. But shall that conclusion make us despairful? Surely not. We must take human nature into account. We are brought to truer views of ourselves and others. We have to recognise the fact that we and all men are sinners, and that it is out of this poor, weak, sinful material of which our nature is made up that God by His grace is to bring perfection. We feel that if anything is to be made of us, that it must be a long, toilsome work. We realize how much we ever need to draw upon the Divine pity and the Divine patience; for if Christ should give us up, how utterly we should sink! There is not a single soul that does not ever need Him, and those who are striving most earnestly after perfection feel as though they needed Him the most. There is no reason for despair, for despair even of the ultimate result; but there is reason that we should cast ourselves more on God. And then, though our attainments are small, our outreaching towards perfection very limited at the best, and our disappointments grieve us bitterly, yet remember that there is something, there is some attainment, and that is better than nothing; we shall not despise what we have gained, because perfection is not reached. I am not content when I see the buds of apple-blossom on the tree—I want fruit; but because the fruit has not come, I will not despise the blossom, since that is the preparation for it. I am not content when my babe takes its first step or two, and then stumbles—I want to see it walk without fear; but I do not despise that first step—it is the beginning—there is a relation between the first effort and the last, between the step toward perfection and perfection

itself. So, though the attainment of Divine knowledge and holiness is limited—extremely limited—and we are often disappointed, and exclaim, “I have seen an end of all perfection,” our virtues are very small and poor; yet we ought to add, “I will reach toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Let us, however, look, though more briefly, at the other sentence, “but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.” I have called it

II. *Unfulfilled Demands.*

By this I understand that though our attainments in the divine life are limited, the *law of the divine life is unlimited*, and always will be so. The commandment of God as we have it is exceeding broad; it covers everything; it demands the highest things from us, and in the sense of fulfilling it, reaching the end of it, we shall never fully realise its breadth. So that we set over in direct contrast against human frailty and imperfection the demands which are made by God upon us. I am not speaking now of the ideal of the heathen or the Jew, but of that of the Christian. The law of life, I repeat, is embodied in Christ: what He is we are to be; the commandment is as broad as that and nothing less. We are called to be imitators of Him—to be perfect even as He is perfect. God has sent forth His Son not only to be the sacrifice for sin, to achieve our salvation from punishment, but to set before us in the clearest fashion what that salvation is to result in—to show us how it is to work, and what fruits are to spring therefrom. I say it with deliberate solemnity, that God could have no purpose in seeking our salvation if it were simply to remove the possibility of punishment—that never was His main design; it would not have been worth His while to have done only that—He would rather have swept us utterly away; but we are rescued by Christ that we may be sanctified: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Salvation means not simply freedom from punishment, but much more, freedom from sin; and not only freedom from sin—that were a purely negative condi-

tion, just as though you plucked all the weeds out of your garden and did nothing more, planted no seeds—the result would be a hard, dreary barrenness. Not only freedom from sin, but the culture of righteousness, of virtue, of holy character, and that complete. God is seeking for this and nothing less. He sets before us in the clearest manner His demand—and that is perfection.

Now remembering what I have said, and the somewhat saddening view that we are compelled to take of the limit of our reach toward that high standard, the demand seems startling, and the more so when we remember that it is not modified or lessened in the smallest degree. There is no attempt to narrow it down, or to adjust it to the conditions of society or the individual life. No notice seems to be taken in it of human weakness, of the difficulties which hamper men, of the temptations which assail and fiercely test their strength. God does not come down to us and say with lenient tone, "I know your frailty, your corrupt nature, the hard battle that you have to fight, the limitation of your best endeavours to be good, the struggle that you have to enter upon with the world and the devil. I know all this, and therefore I consent to modify my demands and be satisfied with less than perfection; I cannot expect My law to be fulfilled in your case." No, God never says that in any one instance, for that would simply destroy the authority of His law, and it would be felt not to be specially binding upon human nature. It would lead to a pitiable paltering with excuses; and the attainment of virtue, poor enough now at the best, would be miserably poorer then. But He says this: "Behold Christ, follow Him, let your life be like His, without flaw or spot; I know your nature, your sins, your tests, your struggles, your limited spiritual life and love; yet I claim my right to all manhood and womanhood that I have made that they shall perfectly fulfil My law; but that you may do so I will make My grace sufficient for you—My grace shall be made perfect in your weakness—Christ shall be not only an example without you to be copied, but *within* you a life, a spirit, a mind, moulding you Himself into His own image, that He may present you faultless before the throne." That is the way

God places His law of a perfect life before us, in all its breadth and limitless demands, but meets our need with the promise of His own supreme love and power. Thus God never brings His law down to the weakness of man, but Himself brings up man to the perfection of His own law. I hope that is so far clear.

Yes, but it may be said that with all that perfection is not reached, at least so far as life in this world is concerned ; and therefore the demand seems excessive, the revelation of what we are expected to be as seen in Christ is so glorious, so utterly beyond us, even to apprehend it, much less to imitate it, that instead of feeling stimulated we are depressed by it. We feel that it is no good attempting. No good ! Why, do you not know that the higher your ambition, the higher your achievement ?

“ Sink not in spirit : who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher much than he who means a tree.”

So sings George Herbert. There is always an advantage in having a perfect rule of life, even though you should fail to keep it. If an art student is learning to make a perfect circle, put the perfect circle before him, and let him try at that, you will never help him by giving him an imperfect one out of consideration for his want of skill. The captain starts on his voyage, and his chart shows him the straightest and directest route across the ocean ; but soon he finds the winds and currents will not let the vessel go straight—he is driven now hither, now thither. But does he at once declare, “ I cannot follow my chart, and therefore it is of no use having one ; no man ever did sail straight, and no man ever will, so here it goes overboard ? ” Is he such a fool ? No, but he labours to keep the direct line and to follow directions as closely as possible, for without this he would speedily bring his vessel to grief.

So I say that it is better to have a perfect law to obey, even though the obedience fail again and yet again. We shall be more like Christ, because we try to be perfect even as He was perfect. Do not therefore cry, “ It is no good,”

It is no good? it is the chiefest good. The breadth of the commandment, the beauty of Christ's life, is the very inspiration and stimulus you need. It is broad, it is a law which comprehends all who are brought into contact with it—all men, women, and children—in all circumstances and positions; it extends to the outward conduct, to the inner life; it follows us with its demands to the last—nay, it meets us on the other side of the grave in the person of Christ Himself; for He is to be for ever the law of our eternal life, since there we shall be perpetually learning of Him, and growing up into His likeness, knowing more and more of what is meant by the words, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."





REV. LUKE H. WISEMAN, M.A.

CRUCIFYING THE FLESH.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. LUKE H. WISEMAN, M.A.

“They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.”—GAL. v. 24.

THE soul of man is like a garden, in which weeds and briars, thorns and brambles, grow in wild and tangled confusion ;—unprofitable plants which the Lord hath not planted, and which are to be rejected and burned. Here and there amidst this useless growth appears a fairer form—a rich fruit, or a beautiful plant, which seems to tell of a better state of things in days gone by, of a higher culture lost, and of the possibility that the whole garden might still be retrieved, and might be made fruitful and pleasant.

The culture of this garden—the work of Divine grace in the soul—is of a twofold nature, which we may not improperly distinguish as negative and positive. Negatively, there is the removal of what is evil ; positively, there is the implantation of what is good. There is, on the one hand, the rooting up of what is noxious or unprofitable ; on the other hand the planting of what is useful and beautiful. There is the rooting up—the stubbing up, as we might more correctly say—of the thorn and the brier, and there is the planting of the fir tree and the myrtle tree, and all the other trees of righteousness ; so that the tangled wilderness,

first cleared of its foul growth, may afterwards become fragrant as Sharon and fruitful as Carmel.

This is the twofold manifestation of the Divine life in the soul of man. These are the two forms which the work of sanctification assumes ;—the removal of the evil, and the implantation of the good—the decay and destruction of the old nature, and the uprising and growth of the new. But in what order of time do these processes respectively operate? Must the one be completed before the other can be begun? Must we wait till the negative process of uprooting is ended, before we can expect the positive process? Must all the thorns and brambles be cleared away, and the soil rendered perfectly clean, before any growth of holiness, or even any planting, can take place? Certainly not. The two processes may and do go on together. The soul, not yet altogether cleansed from sin, may nevertheless exhibit many flourishing fruits of grace. A dwindling, decaying thorn may still be seen beside the fruitful vine, a brier-shoot beneath the fragrant rose, and a bramble feebly entwining around the trunk of the majestic cedar. Our attention may be required for the eradication of that which still lingers of remaining evil, and at the same time for the improving culture of existing graces. In the words of Holy Writ, we may be at one and the same time “cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,” and “perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.”

The text, as you will see, refers to the first branch or division of this Divine life, and of this only. The present discourse therefore will not present a complete view of this work of grace in the soul, but of one side of it only, and that the negative side. Let us then occupy our thoughts

together concerning the removal of evil, the decay and destruction of the old man, the withering of the plants of bitterness, the crucifixion of the carnal mind.

Perhaps the expression made use of by St. Paul in our text—the crucifixion of the flesh—will be found better adapted than most others to help us to clear views upon this vitally important matter. We are to be crucified together with Christ, or as the apostle elsewhere expresses it, “planted together in the likeness of His death.”* That which is to be crucified is the old self, the carnal mind; “our old man,” says the same apostle, “is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.”† This crucifixion Paul elsewhere represents as having taken place actually in his own person, “I am crucified with Christ;”‡ and believers are commanded to “*mortify*,” that is—for the original etymological sense of the word mortify has now grown obsolete—to “*put to death* their members which are upon the earth.”§ In like manner St. Peter declares that whosoever “hath suffered in the flesh,” after the pattern of the crucified Lord, “hath ceased from sin,”|| where the crucifying of the flesh and the ceasing from sin are represented as identical. Nor is this to be considered as an optional matter, or as a singular height of sanctity. On the contrary, it is described in Holy Writ as being the usual estate of those who are in Christ; for we can no more escape the cross, if we would win the crown, than our Master could. It is thus St. Paul represents it, summing up the whole in two or three words—“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh.”¶

* Rom. vi. 5.

† Rom. vi. 6.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

§ Col. iii. 5.

|| 1 Pet. iv. 1.

¶ Gal. v. 24.

But you may ask, "What is it that is to be crucified? It certainly cannot mean our bodies, after the literal pattern of our Lord Christ. What are we precisely to understand by '*the flesh*,' which, it is here stated, those who are Christ's must crucify?"

The reply, my brethren, is at hand. As the tree is known by its fruits, so the flesh may be known by its works. In a previous paragraph St. Paul states that "the works of the flesh" are plain to all, not needing, like the more hidden fruits of the Spirit, to be educed and specified: "the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* These are the outward works or manifestations, known and obvious to all, known by the common conscience of mankind more or less to be sinful, condemned by moralists, and inexcusable by ourselves, if our conscience be in unperverted and healthy action.

But we want to go deeper than this. For it is not the works, but the worker, which is to be crucified. Where then are we to find the doer of these things—what is the source whence these evils proceed? From the depravity of the heart, from our innate tendency to evil, says a theologian. To whom we reply, Your answer is correct as far as it goes, but it does not adequately meet this case; for we cannot, except in a very shadowy and metaphorical sense, crucify a

* Gal. v. 19-22.

principle or a tendency. Still less does the Scripture authorise us to attribute these evils exclusively to the devil. Satan and his angels undoubtedly foster and promote these evil works by means of their subtle arts ; but they are not the real actors, the true workers of them.

To understand this point, we refer to the words of our Blessed Lord Himself ; and the words I am about to cite, it may be remarked in passing, were not among the deeper mysteries which Jesus reserved for His more private intercourse with the Twelve ; for before uttering these words He "called all the people to Him, and said, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand." "*From within,*" says our Saviour, "*out of the heart of men,* proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness : all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."* Here then we learn from the words of the Incarnate Lord Himself, that the agent to whom all those evil works, all those works of the flesh, are to be attributed, is no other than ourselves. They come from within—they proceed "out of the heart of men"—their true, inmost self.

An objection here arises. "This can scarcely be," argues some one yonder in the congregation, "at least to the full extent. For in the catalogue of sins given by St. Paul, and in the similar catalogue given by our Lord, there are several evils of which I not only have never been actually guilty, but which I have always utterly detested. How then can it

* Mark vii. 21-23.

be just to brand me as the doer of what I have always avoided?"

To this we reply that the law of God is to be viewed not as so many isolated fragmentary precepts, but as a whole. In order to constitute us sinners, it is not necessary that we should break every commandment in the decalogue. The Divine law is a perfect whole, and in whatever particular part we transgress it, we transgress against it as a whole. It is not necessary, in order to constitute an Englishman a felon, that he should break every one of his country's laws. It is enough if he is proved guilty of the breach of one of them. There may be laws which he has never broken, nay, of which he highly approves, but this does not alter or extenuate the fact of his being a law-breaker. And this principle applies with infinitely greater force to the authoritative harmonious law of the Eternal God than it can possibly do to the fallible and disjointed enactments of the State. What saith the Scripture? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."* If therefore we have performed any of the works of the flesh as above enumerated, it is enough. It evinces the presence and agency of the evil heart. The heart which can originate any one of these evil works is a depraved heart, and without being cleansed cannot enter into the spotless kingdom of those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It follows then that the flesh, which we are commanded to

* James ii. 10, 11.

crucify, whatever the particular form may be in which sin may manifest itself, is no other than ourself—our own self. Perfectly confirmatory of this is that expression of St. Paul where he speaks of his “flesh,” his carnal nature, and “himself,” as being one and the same substance. “For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”* Here is the true doctrine of our depravity—a depravity which neither education, nor politeness, nor legislation, nor force of will can eradicate; for “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”† But this evil self, this carnal heart, this old Adam, may be crucified and expire.

The inquiry here naturally follows, as a second part of our subject, What is to be understood by crucifying the flesh?

First of all, O soul, if thou art in Christ, thou art both crucifier and crucified. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is nevertheless true. For who is it that is to be crucified? It is thyself, thy old self, the body of sin. And who is it that is to execute the sentence, to put this old self on the cross? Certainly, by God's grace and help, thyself again—thyself in thy capacity as a new creature in Christ Jesus. How inexplicable this struggle and conflict, this duality, this co-existence of two natures within a child of God, as he exclaimeth with the Scripture, “With the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh”—that is, in so far as the flesh hath any remaining power—“the law of sin!”‡

It is thus that our Lord speaks concerning His servants.
 “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and

* Rom. vii. 18.

† Rom. viii. 8.

‡ Rom. vii. 25:

take up his cross, and follow Me."* In these words we may observe the same duality of which I have just spoken. For who is it that is to be denied? "Himself." And who is it that is to exercise the coercive, denying power? "Himself" again. The servant of Christ is to be both denier and denied;—denied, in so far as he is yet in the flesh, serving the law of sin;—denier, in so far as he is in the Spirit, made free from the law of sin and death, and imbued with power from on high. And how far is this denial to be carried? Even as far as the Lord Himself carried it, namely to the point of crucifixion and death. "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

And whither, O Jesu, must we follow Thee? When Thou didst take up Thy cross, didst Thou not carry it towards the place of suffering? When Thou becamest too weak, through Thine accumulated agonies, any longer to sustain its weight, didst Thou not still, fainting and bleeding, insulted and spit upon, accompany the strong-shouldered countryman of Cyrene and the rabble of Thine implacable enemies, to Golgotha and to the place called Calvary? Wast Thou not nailed to the wood and suspended on the cross? And didst Thou not thereon bow Thy stricken head and dismiss Thy spirit, saying "It is finished"? O teach us thus to die with Thee! Thus may the body of our sin be destroyed! Thus may we be crucified with our Lord, that with Him also we may revive again according to the power of His resurrection!

This subject to some of you, my brethren, may appear

* Matt. xvi. 24.

difficult, requiring time and thought in order to its comprehension. It may be well therefore to dwell upon it yet a little longer, and to examine more minutely and more deeply the import of St. Paul's words: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him."* In these words, as in our text, the outward sign or symbol is the punishment of death by crucifixion; the thing spiritually signified is the decay and destruction of the carnal mind. A nearer contemplation of the outward sign may assist us to comprehend that which is inwardly and spiritually signified.

Viewing, then, the process of punishment and death by crucifixion, we may observe in it three progressive degrees or stages. In the first stage the culprit is arrested, arraigned, condemned, and treated with such contumely and scorn as is due to a convicted malefactor. Before they actually "crucified the Lord of glory," they caused Him to undergo at least the mock formality of a trial and a sentence; and sentence having been given, what insults they heaped upon Him! As if the scourging which He had already undergone were not torture and ignominy enough, they now bowed the knee before Him in derision, they blindfolded and struck Him, they spit in His face, they crowned Him with thorns, they compelled Him to carry the instrument of His own torture. The second stage of crucifixion is when the sufferer has been placed upon the cross. The feet are fastened to the upright post by a bolt driven through them; the outstretched hands are fastened to the transverse beam by a nail driven through each; and the man is left to perish through exhaustion and pain. Still it is to be noted

* Romans vi. 6.

that he is alive ;—suffering, yet alive ;—crucified, yet alive ;—dying, yet alive—so that if that bolt were drawn which now confines the feet, and if those nails were drawn which now fasten the hands, the crucified man, though temporarily weakened by pain and loss of blood, would presently recover strength, and might after a few days be seen hearty and vigorous as ever. The third stage of crucifixion is when the punishment has taken its full effect, and the sufferer has expired. Now he is dead indeed, nor can any human skill restore him.

In like manner, brethren, we may trace successive grades or stages of crucifying the body of sin. Nor ought we to turn away from the contemplation of such a subject ; remembering that our elder Brother did not shrink from the actual endurance of these outward tortures, and that an eyewitness of His sufferings has said : “ Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” * In this view, the man to be crucified is the old Adam—our own sinful self—the body of sin.

First then, by the grace of God, the old Adam is arraigned, adjudged to be worthy of death, sentenced, and visited with all the marks of hatred and contempt. Thousands have arrived thus far, who nevertheless have failed as yet to enter fully into the kingdom of God. “ What I hate, that do I,” † is the correct though brief description of countless numbers who possess enough of illuminating and awakening grace to render them constant revilers of themselves. “ Fool that I am ! wretch that I am ! holy vows condemn me, and aspirations after liberty only reveal to me

* 1 Peter, iv. 1.

† Rom. vii. 15.

more piercingly the degradation and slavery of my sin ! I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes !" Thus it is that we buffet the old Adam, strike him, and spit upon him ; though as yet he has not been placed upon the cross, and perhaps in his turn laughs us to scorn, derides the inefficacy of our efforts to destroy him, and half induces the persuasion that to get him fairly pinioned and fastened helpless upon the cross is a victory we shall never achieve. But O soul, listen not to that plausible deadly suggestion of unbelief ! It is miserable enough to be ever blaming and abhorring ourselves, to have the brightness of life's daytime bedimmed by the mists of the pit ; but surely even this misery of a soul that pines for ennobling liberty is preferable to the mirth of slaves who are content to wear their chains ! Therefore be not weary, be not unthankful, for the anguish of a true penitent is a sure token that the Lord is at hand, and that deliverance is nigh.

We may contemplate next a further degree of crucifying the flesh, namely that in which the old Adam is actually nailed to the cross and dying. The soul having "tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come,"—and having become one with the Lord by faith—has now entered into a new state. Instead of sin reigning over us, we reign over sin, and have become new creatures. The old man is nailed to the cross. He is *being crucified*. Yet still he lives. Subdued, humbled, crippled, and suffering the agonies of death, still he lives. And what tenacity of life he exhibits ! What a hard and lingering death he dies ! How he begs and prays for a little respite ! "Take me down from this cross. Show me only a little quarter.

Have we not been friends together? Shall we never more taste together the sweet enjoyments of former days? Give me a little liberty—a month, a week, only a day, and I being so grievously weakened you will find no difficulty in binding me again." Thus he pleads for release; and O what a strange bewitching power do his words at times possess! But regard him not. Show him no quarter. Compassion is a virtue, but compassion is misplaced here. What! shall I spare my direst, subtlest, deadliest foe, the murderer of the Lord, the murderer of my own soul? Shall the assassin be spared because with pleasant tones of deceit he endeavours to compass his ends, even after justice hath seized him? However hard it may be to us, we must show no relentings here, for the daily mortification (that is, putting to death) of sinful self, is the condition of our own life. And we are encouraged to look daily for his death; to have faith in Jesus, that we may witness his utter destruction. But can this ever be on this side the grave?



REV. J. HILES HITCHENS.

THE CHURCH A VINEYARD:

A SERMON

BY THE REV. J. HILES HITCHENS.

*Preached in Eccleston Square Church, Belgrave Road, London, on
Sabbath, March 22nd, 1874.*

"The vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted."—Psalm lxxx. 15.

VERY varied are the representations of the Church of Christ as given in Holy Writ, and each is distinctively suggestive. From objects animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, the inspired authors have borrowed their metaphors. But every figure of speech is one which conveys the ideas of beauty, utility, and preciousness. The aspect of the Church, to which I ask your attention at the present time, is that of a vineyard—a vineyard which God's right hand has planted.

Now the *antiquity* of vineyards is surely very suggestive. One of the earliest occupations of the human race was the cultivation of vines. The produce of the vineyard was the cause of Noah's disgrace, whilst it was the proof of Melchizedek's hospitality to Abraham. The vine is reputed to be a native of the hilly region about the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and of the Persian province of Ghilan. But the

Jews have a tradition that the Eternal One first planted it on the fertile slopes of Hebron. Their tradition is favoured by the fact that vineyards abound in that locality; that the climate is peculiarly suitable for the cultivation of the vine, which grows in great luxuriance, and produces unusually luscious clusters. But vineyards have not been confined to Palestine. The vine has been carried to all parts of the world. Whilst only certain countries are suitable for extensive cultivation of the plant, yet there is perhaps no land where it is wholly unknown. Is it not thus with the Church of Christ? "God brought a vine out of Egypt, cast out the heathen and planted it"—He "prepared room before it and caused it to take deep root and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." The Church, which now has its members scattered over the earth, dates back, back, back to that early hour in the world's history when God intimated His purpose to provide a Saviour. In the East, and in the infancy of the human race, the precious germ of the future good was deposited. Though for a long lapse of years the truth of God was confined to the Holy Land, the Jewish Church fulfilling its mission as the guardian of that truth, yet Israel was not allowed to be a monopolist. The plant of Heaven-given wisdom was transplanted to other lands and peoples, striking its roots firmly and bearing its fruits freely. Revelation and religion, though for a while restricted to the limits of a nation, were all the time preparing for the appointed season when the boundaries should be crossed. The Lord of the vineyard so trained His Church

that when the colonies of Jews migrated to Gentile cities, they became planters of the truth, and pioneers of the Gospel. Each little company of Israelites was like a shoot from the parent vine, which, often under very adverse circumstances, retained its hold upon the soil. Then came the fulness of time. The vineyard received a new and marvellous influence. The vine was introduced into alien lands. The Church was founded in hostile countries, and has ever since weathered the changes of unfavourable climates. But year after year there have been fresh accessions to its strength, until now all people are invited to sit under the shadow of the glorious development, and partake to the full of its luscious fruits. It is not a thing of to-day this holy religion. Its outward manifestations may be new. Some of its fruits may be novel in their form and flavour. But the vineyard is coeval with the race of man. There has never been a period in the world's annals when God has left Himself without witnesses upon earth. Do not then imagine, when we beg you to receive the truth of God into your heart, that we urge upon you any *new* duty, any novel obligation. It is old but not obsolete. The Church has ever presented its claims to the affections and energies of men. It has ever been the duty and privilege of man to bow before the Holy Presence, and then bind himself unto those who, like himself, feel the preciousness of the Infinite Spirit.

The *varieties* in the vineyard cannot fail to claim our notice. As we walk among the plants we are impressed with the absence of uniformity. Observing that in general characteristics all the plants are alike, we equally note that each vine has its peculiar features more or less prominently

marked. In one respect all are so much alike that there is no hesitancy in affirming they are all vines. But in another respect all are widely diverse. One has more branches than another. One grows higher than another. One has leaves that are of a more delicate hue than another. One has more tendrils than another. One has more fruit than another. One has more perfect clusters than another. One has less fruit, but what it bears is far more delicious in flavour, than another. One flourishes more than another because it is planted where the noontide sun pours its full rays upon it. One develops more freely than another because its position is a sheltered one. Thus varieties will be surely observed in the vineyard among the vines, whilst in an Eastern vineyard may be seen growing other kinds of fruit trees. This Jesus in His parable intimates when He says—"A certain man had a *fig-tree* planted in his vineyard."—So there are varieties in the Church of Christ. The followers of the Redeemer, agreeing in hope, and aim, and object of faith, differ very widely in other respects. Their individuality is very strongly marked. Some disciples of Christ yield plentifully of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, meekness, faith. Whilst others bear so little fruit that the Lord of the vineyard might almost say they have "nothing but leaves." Some Christians are like the vines you frequently see in conservatories, trained and tied up, so that they may grow in just the shape and space prescribed by the gardener. There is little or no freedom about them. They dare not utter their own convictions, and scarcely indulge their own thoughts. Their piety and religious principles are of the hot-house order.

Others are like the vines which are grown outside houses in this country, allowed to spread, to make an abundant show of foliage, but productive of little fruit and that of not the most honied flavour. There is great diffusion, great show of life, but little precious result.

In some instances, undoubtedly, we can expect no other than the results we have. The circumstances are such as to render any other appearance improbable. Very surprising are the modifications in substance and form effected on plants by external influences. Thus, for example, we are told that "the English ribston pippin assumes in hotter parts of India a pyramidical aspect;" that "in Ceylon the apple-tree sends out numerous runners under ground, which continually rise into small stems, and form a thick forest growth around the parent tree;" that "the oak is worthless grown at the Cape of Good Hope;" and that "the rhubarb does not produce in England the medicinal substance which it yields in Chinese Tartary." Nor does the vine bear such large and luscious fruit in this land as it yields in the East. So must we not expect from all Christian professors an equal amount of fervour—an equal strength of faith—an equal depth of joy—an equal buoyancy of hope—an equal breadth of charity. We must take into consideration the propitious or repressing circumstances amid which Providence has planted them. We must remember how some have been located in sunny corners, sheltered and well nourished, whilst others have struggled in exposed positions with chilling and deadening influences. Many of the modifications of the Christian character which we witness may be ascribed very largely, if not wholly, to the surroundings

of the believer. But the Husbandman, knowing the peculiar circumstances of each plant, will deal with it accordingly. The unerring Judge will not expect at the last to find so large and so choice a crop of fruit from some of us as from others—albeit He will expect to see we have each done our best in the position in which He has placed us.

This leads me to remark on the *purposes* of the vineyard. When vines are planted and a vineyard is formed, it is not with a view to cover the ground with foliage, to ornament the slopes of some neighbouring hill, or to afford occupation to a number of hungry workers. No, the object of the owner of the vineyard is to obtain fruit. The husbandman reasonably anticipates that his vines when well tended will quickly remunerate him for all his labours, and form a source of annual income. If, however, after a fair trial the plant should prove fruitless it is removed to make way for one more promising. So the purpose of the Eternal in sending His truth, and subsequently His Son into the world was, as it is, to obtain from man the fruits of righteousness. His revelation and religion were not intended to be the means simply of civilising man—the means only of improving their worldly prospects. His Church was formed not for the purpose of opening up a professional calling for a class of mankind, and covering the world with “reverend” vinedressers. No. His object is to see in us and obtain from us that which glorifies Him. Jesus thus stated the case: “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

Civilisation, social improvement, mental progress and ministerial service will be certain to follow where the fruits of righteousness are found. The Church will be a blessing to the world, and a sphere for most diligent toil, so long as in it the Lordly Proprietor can discern the signs of life and fruition. Each of us must exhibit our vitality by our fruit. It is of no service that we are associated with the trees of God's planting otherwise. We are cumberers of the ground. Faith without works is dead. Foliage without fruit is hypocrisy. Nothing can compensate for the absence of clustering excellencies. There is no greater anomaly beneath the blue skies than a barren believer. The soul that truly loves Jesus will spontaneously put forth its efforts to please Him. Constrained by the noblest and purest and sweetest of all principles, the heart will lay its best productions at the feet of Christ. Realizing the duty and destiny of every regenerated man, the Church says as Solomon represents, "Let my beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Dear Sirs, it is a question worthy of being forced home upon our hearts—are we fruitful? Are we giving evidence of our spiritual life by submission to our Master's will? Are we striving every day to overcome the evils of our hearts and lives? Are we exhibiting the temper of Jesus? Are we aiming after conformity to His image? Do we daily yield ourselves to His wish? Do we cast our whole experience upon His promise? Does His love constrain us to watch, and pray, and work, and wait? Do we try to expel the proud, discontented, selfish, angry, revengeful feelings which sometimes possess us? Let us ask ourselves these questions, and look up to

the God of all grace in the words of George Herbert :

“For as thou dost impart Thy grace
The greater shall our glory be ;
The measure of our joys is in this place,
The stuff with thee.

Let me not languish then and spend
A life as barren to Thy praise
As is the dust, to which that life doth tend,
But with delays.”

We cannot forget that there are *enemies* of the vineyard. The vines are not favoured with immunity from the visits of those creatures whose design is to disrobe, devour, and destroy. There are birds that frequent the vineyards by day-time ; there are foxes that slyly approach the vines under the cover of night ; and there are, in some parts, wild boars that commit terrible devastation whenever they have opportunity. These are but typical of the enemies of the Church. Jeremiah refers to the “ birds round about ” being against the heritage of the Lord. In all ages the followers of God have suffered from the effects of the spirit of the world. The ambitions, anxieties, occupations, successes, and failures to which the godly are subject, and in which like others they must be sharers, become birds of prey, often robbing them of what would be precious fruit. There is no hour when we are safe from these winged foes. For when we are in our chambers, or in our churches, and desire to feel alone with the Divine Presence, some anxious thought, flying across the mind, alights for a season, and plucks at the fruit. At other times a whole flock of cares will take possession of the mind, seriously disturb the foliage of our pro-

fession, and carry off the sweetest of our Christian graces. Then Solomon speaks of "the little foxes that spoil the vines." These are what men denominate "little sins." Though there are no small offences in God's sight, yet somehow men—professedly religious men—have come to treat some sins as mere *peccadillos* not affecting their Christian character, or their position in the Church of Christ. There can be no doubt but that these foxes—"little sins"—have wrought serious injury to the vineyard. They have quashed many a good emotion, crushed many a developing excellency, and broken off many a struggling branch of promise. Angry tempers, selfish greed, irreverent speech, equivocation, and dishonesty in minor matters are some of these "little foxes" that have not infrequently ruined the vintage. The "vines have tender grapes," and these suffer immensely by these sly, destructive foxes. Well will it be for us if we are kept upon our guard against the deceitfulness of sin. There is another class of enemies of whom the psalmist speaks in his 80th Psalm. "The boar of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field devour it." There have ever been forces outside the vineyard determined upon accomplishing the greatest possible havoc among the trees of the Lord. Opposition and bitter persecution are not unknown to the people of God. Again and again have fierce and blood-thirsty attacks been made upon the Church; and though in these days, and in this country, the position of Christ's disciple is more favoured, yet we are not free from danger. There are still "boars in the wood"—still "wild beasts in the field." We hear their roar now and then, which assures us that the spirit and temper of our foes are un-

changed. Only the other day did we catch the words of one who thinks to change the whole aspect of the vineyard saying to his "right reverend" associates, "It is good for us to be here in England. It is yours to *subjugate and subdue*; to *bend and break the will of an imperial race*." Yes, sirs, the birds of prey—the little foxes—and the boars of the wood are still enemies of the Church of Christ; and against them all it is our duty to keep vigil.

We must, however, never lose sight of the *keeper* of the vineyard. It was customary to erect a tower in ancient vineyards, where a watch was kept in order to repel all assaults of enemies. Yonder from his watch-tower the unseen but all-seeing God guards His Church. By the mouth of His servant Isaiah, the Infinite One says: "In that day sing unto her: a vineyard of red wine; I, the Lord, do keep it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Mark the words "every moment," "night and day." What season can that be in which the vineyard of the Lord is without a keeper? In the darkest hour of persecution, as well as in the sunniest period of liberty and growth—in the winter of our discontent, as well as the summer of success and satisfaction the Lord watches over His people. Throughout all the troubled past He has preserved His Church—and He will preserve it, whatever may await its future history. There shall ever be a vineyard—that vineyard shall extend in its dimensions, and increase in its fruitfulness until one day He who planted, and purchased, and preserved it shall come to His own possessions, and see there the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

One word in relation to the *labourers* in the vineyard.

Vines require constant attention ; and in a large vineyard there are grades of helpers, each discharging his particular work. So in the Church the Lord has His labourers. These are workers of every class. To us, as Christians, the voice comes, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." Life is but a day. Some there are who do not enter the vineyard till the eleventh hour, whilst others begin work at the ninth, or at the sixth hour of the day. Alas ! that any should be found standing all the day idle !—doing nothing ;—nothing for the good of the vineyard—nothing for the honour of its glorious proprietor. There are some of you deterred from doing anything by what is regarded as absence of talent, or lack of opportunity. Dear sirs, what is wanting is rather an honest and earnest wish to do good. The humblest of us will find or make opportunities adequate to our abilities every day, if our hearts are set on service. None of us is too weak to accomplish some good.

" The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dew-drop from the sun."

Nor need we step out of our domestic or social position to be effective agents in the Lord's vineyard. And oh ! the blessedness of such service ! There is an eternal festive evening for the vineyard labourers coming, when each shall receive according to his toil. Meanwhile there is the *spiritual* health which springs from toil—and there is the blessed satisfaction of witnessing the results of our efforts—beholding the vines grow, and the clusters ripen under our own care. When that worthy and devout man of God—Harlan Page—was dying he had the joy of looking back over a life of usefulness, and of being confident that he had

been the instrument in the hand of infinite grace of saving scores of immortal souls. But none of you suppose that his joy was all concentrated in that parting hour. Oh no ! every word of warning or invitation he uttered—every act of kindness he performed—every intercession for individuals he presented had a reflex influence. He was blest in the act, and by the means of blessing others. So shall we find it. Then, brothers, let us arise to work for Christ.

“ Work while the daylight lasteth,
Ere the shades of night come on,
Ere the Lord of the vineyard cometh,
And the labourer’s work is done,

“ Watch not the clouds above thee,
Let the wild winds round thee sweep ;
God may the seed time give thee,
But another hand may reap.”



REV. ALEXR. MCAUSLANE, D.D.

DEATH A GAIN TO THE CHRISTIAN.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER MCAUSLANE, D.D.

"For me to die is gain."—*Paul: Phil. I. 21.*

DEATH has received many names which are unpleasant, yea repulsive. It has been called a "rigid lord, a cold usurer, a savage despot, a merciless foe." But when a man becomes a true Christian, death begins to appear in quite a different light. To him it is the dawning of the unending day, the harbinger of eternal joy, the chariot in which he is to be conveyed to his beautiful and blessed home. Hence he can say with a jubilant heart, "For me to die is gain."

It is supposed by some good and learned men that, just as the hard working labourer falls at night into a profound sleep, and does not awake until the following morning, so the soul of the Christian, immediately after death, becomes inactive and unconscious, and that it will continue in this inert condition till the morning dawns, which is to witness the rising of all the dead. But this idea could not have been entertained by the Apostle Paul, as the few words which we have read clearly prove. To be somewhere for a long series of years knowing nothing, seeing nothing, feeling nothing, doing nothing, rather than in this world, with his mind engaged in the study of God's character, with his heart absorbed in the honour of Christ, and with his life devoted to the salvation of men, could that be gain? Instead of being an advantage, it would have been a serious and a lamentable loss. Destroy the telescope through which the astronomer has often surveyed the starry heavens, but in doing this you leave him untouched. Even so, the ruth-

less reaper Death, will come some day to destroy the body; but the soul that dwells within, instead of being injured in any sense, will then bound away, like the imperial bird from the cage in which it was fettered and confined, to the land of friendship, love, and beauty. "Absent from the body present with the Lord."

I.—Death is gain to the Christian because it is a change from imperfect to perfect light.

When we were born again and adopted into the family of God, we were also translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. But the light by which we were then surrounded, and which we trust has been increasing ever since, does not shed its rays upon many of the things we desire to know. There are districts of truth which we cannot explore, mountains of thought which we cannot climb, mines of intellectual wealth which we cannot even touch, and questions arising out of current events which we cannot answer. For instance, why is an earthly monarch permitted to gratify his sinful desires, at the expense of the peace and the comfort, the liberties and the lives of many of his fellow creatures? Why does wealth flow in upon some men like a flood, who are so selfish that they will not assist a single poor person nor contribute to any benevolent institution? Why is splendid virtue kept so frequently in the shade, while unmingled vice struts about in the most lofty and conspicuous places of the earth? Why is death allowed to enter a home, and strike down, in the midst of his days, and the zenith of his strength, a husband and father, who is the only human stay and solace of his wife and children, leaving them to the heritage and hardships which are always associated with a widowhood and an orphanage of poverty? Why are the abettors of religious error permitted to be so successful, when that success produces such havoc among the spiritual interests of men, and prevents the extension and the triumph of Christ's Kingdom? Truly we are now encompassed with a light, but it is the faint and feeble light of the early morning, the full blaze of the meridian sun is yet to come; nor will it appear until we have exchanged this earth for yonder world, of which it is said "there shall be no night there." Then we shall learn

from those who have crossed the Jordan before us, some of the secrets of Providence which here we could not discover, and some of the mysteries of Redemption which here we could not unravel. Then all the events of this life will become transparent, the bright ones which cheered our path, and the dark ones which chequered it; and we shall be convinced that both were necessary for our complete education and perfect sanctification. Then we shall read in the ever-open volume of God's purpose, the wisdom of all His permissions, the reasons of all His appointments, the causes of all His judgments, and the explanations of those difficulties in His providence which often baffled us, and made us feel, as John felt when he wept, because no man was able to open the sealed book. All these discoveries of truth will not be obtained by us in a moment; all this reaping down and gathering in of the vast harvest of knowledge will demand time; there will be intellectual progress near the throne as well as on the footstool, but as we are rising from one eminence to another, there will be no perplexity, no uncertainty, no confusion, and no darkness. Who does not prefer the natural to the artificial light—the blaze of the sun to the twinkling of the far-distant star? and when we contrast the perfect light of heaven with the imperfect light of earth, and remember that death only lies between them, can anyone be amazed when we individually say, "For me to die is gain."

There is a useful lesson suggested by this part of the subject, which ought not to be overlooked. In the Books of Creation, Providence, and Redemption, there are many paragraphs, which are far more mysterious to us than the hieroglyphics of Egypt are to a little child. What shall we do? Give up the study of those refreshing and soul uplifting volumes on account of these paragraphs? This would be unreasonable, foolish, and to us an unspeakable loss. If we can find a satisfactory comment, accept it gratefully, and if we cannot, let us go on to the next paragraphs we understand, saying of the dark passages which we leave behind, these will reveal their meaning to us under the better and brighter light of the heavenly world as the flowers unfold themselves to the light of the sun.

II.—Death is gain to the Christian because it is a change from imperfect to perfect strength.

Human minds differ from each other in strength, as certainly as the stars differ from each other in glory. Here is one that resembles the eagle in his bold, and lofty flights, there is another which cannot soar at all. Here is one whose piercing eye can penetrate a truth to its inmost core, there is another which can only deal with the exterior. Here is one that can analyse the nicest proportions of philosophical and metaphysical thought, there is another which cannot attempt such an invaluable work. The strongest mind, however, is at present pervaded with a feebleness which it often feels, and which arrests its progress. To cease to think altogether is purely impossible, for even when balmy sleep closes the senses to the outer world, the mind is busy. But to think continuously and profoundly upon one particular subject, would soon cause the brain to tremble, and the mainspring of reason to be unhinged. Hence how little can the most studious know during the brief period of his history in this, the preliminary stage of his existence? He can only be as Newton said of himself, "Like a boy playing on the sea shore, and diverting himself by now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than usual, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before him."

Human bodies are not all endowed with the same amount of vigour and activity; but how comparatively weak is the most powerful! There are weights which it cannot lift, burdens which it cannot carry, and journeys which it cannot undertake. Frequently is it overcome by disease, exhausted by labour, and prostrated by lassitude. Nor does it require some powerful agency to extract from it all its strength, and leave it as inert as the stone—an atom, a moth, a thought, can accomplish this.

Mentally and physically our strength is imperfect, but this will not be true of us when we stand within the confines of the magnificent future which awaits us beyond the grave. Are we there to serve God day and night, that is incessantly? So says the Bible. Then our mental power will be vastly superior to what it is at present. The eyes of the understanding will always be bright and clear, the memory will always be retentive, and the imagination will always be pre-

pared for still loftier excursions. We shall think without weariness, meditate without langour, and constantly travel into the boundless regions of truth, without wishing to rest ; and when the soul is re-united to its body, it will find its old friend and companion so changed, as to be in every way adapted to all the rapidity of its movements. For, although the body is sown in weakness, it will be raised in power, and the nature and extent of that power will be such that, the soul will never again be impeded by the body, and so it will never cry out, as it often does here, "loose me and let me go." O how rapidly, as well as accurately, shall we then become acquainted with the ways, the works and the character of God, when in mind and in body we are endowed with the strength of angels. We shall learn more in a week than we can now do in a year, and, glorious prospect ! we shall be continually learning. Can the immortal mind have a terminus ? Impossible. Can the finite ever reach the infinite ? Impossible. The beautiful scenery around us will always be expanding, the fields of intelligence before us will always be lengthening. Every fresh discovery which we make of God in Providence, in Creation, and in Redemption, will lead to a richer. Heaven will be like one resplendent day, with the sun rising higher and higher, like one blessed spring, and a still more luxuriant summer, every plant in full flower, and every flower the bud of a lovelier. As we meditate on the whole, enjoy the whole, and sing of the whole, we shall never once say we are weary. We would not murmur at the present feebleness of our mental powers, but we desire for them more vigour. We would seek to bear with patience all the weakness and infirmities to which our bodies are subjected, but we wish for them a strength which would bid defiance to these ; and when we know that we shall have all this mental and bodily strength on the other side of the grave, can anyone wonder when we say individually, "For me to die is gain."

Many men are much more interested in mental culture than they are in moral training. They seek information for the mind, but they disregard the regeneration of the heart. They desire the diffusion of secular education, but they are heartless about the education of the soul. They would rather spend a month in trying to settle some intellectual question,

than one hour in endeavouring to save a soul from sin. Now, far be it from me to say a single word against secular education; I love it too well for that. Yet the process to which I am now referring should be reversed, and for the following reasons: We can reach the land of pure delight with little intelligence, but we can never enter it without holiness. When we are within it we shall always be studying beneath its clear and unsetting light, but to begin a life of holiness there, by being born again, is purely impossible. Such being the truth, I do say with all the emphasis of my mind and heart, now is the time for spiritual training, heaven is the place for mental culture. Secure in the first place the salvation of your own souls, by faith in Christ, and the constant imitation of Christ, and if on account of your business or domestic duties, you have little time to attend to the improvement of your minds, remember for your comfort, how you will grow in knowledge when you are in the Father's House. Endeavour to secure the salvation of your families, even more than you would try to make them well-informed and powerful in intellect. For if they are in Christ, they will, by-and-bye, however meagre in knowledge and slender in intellect, reach that kingdom of light where they will pursue their studies under the guidance of the Great Teacher. But if they are not in Christ, and continue to the last in this Christless condition, what are they, notwithstanding their fine speech and thoroughly disciplined minds? Wandering stars, to whom are reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Let spiritual excellence always precede mental culture, and he who observes this order will honour Christ, be a benefactor to men, and find himself when the hour of mortal dissolution comes, fully prepared for the mansions of blessedness.

III.—Death is gain to the Christian, because it is a change from imperfect to perfect holiness.

When we were raised from spiritual death into newness of life, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the germ of holiness was implanted within us by the same all-wise, all-loving, and all-powerful Being. Beneath His fostering care and genial influence, that germ has been growing towards maturity, as surely as the fruits of the earth ripen beneath the sun. Has it reached maturity? Are the thoughts which

come into our minds, and which we nurse as an affectionate mother does her child, always pure? Are the feelings which nestle in our hearts, and which we retain, always pure? Are the innumerable words which we utter every day, in the various circles where we move, always pure? Are the deeds which we perform in calmness and amid excitement, beneath the light and the dark, always pure? Can we say of our repentance and faith, our humility and meekness, our self-denial and resignation, our hope and love, these require no additions? The process through which Christian character passes is similar to that which a portrait undergoes. The skilful artist first of all draws the outline accurately, and lays in the dead colouring. Then comes the work of laying in the colours, and he goes on day after day, week after week, and month after month, blending and heightening the effect, until the life-like figure stands out in beautiful and bold relief upon the canvas, perfectly finished. At our conversion we received the outline of character which we require, and must possess, before we can be prepared for Heaven. We have been filling it up, sometimes in sorrow and at other times in joy, sometimes rapidly and at other times slowly. Can we say to anyone at the present hour, look at it, and see if you can discover a single flaw? The doctrine of sinless perfection has been taught, but while we have had the theory, I am certain we have never had the corresponding practice. The moral consciousness of every saint, even the saint of the highest type, tells him that he is not perfectly holy, and the Bible declares that, "there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not," and it adds, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The acorn does not become an oak in a day. The well-disciplined soldier was not a raw recruit yesterday. The ripened scholar has not been made such by a few lessons. There are months between seed time and harvest, and "the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Brethren, sin still dwells within us all, to some extent, and it exerts over us all an evil and an unhappy influence. When we go to the throne of grace, it frequently distracts our thoughts, and causes them to wander, like a bird from its nest. When we are singing the praise of the adorable Redeemer, it frequently causes our

hosannas to languish on our tongues. When we are running the race set before us, and keeping our eyes stedfastly fixed on the goal, it sometimes trips us up, and we fall, to our own sorrow, and sometimes to the dishonour of our Christian profession. When we are labouring for the spiritual welfare of others, it often makes that work, which ought always to be pleasant, an oppressive burden. Sin is, indeed, our inveterate foe. We long to be delivered from it, more than the invalid desires health and the slave groans for freedom. Shall this deliverance come? Yonder field of wheat may be visited by the unfriendly east winds, and it may have to encounter nipping frosts and deluging rains, but notwithstanding these adverse influences, there will be a crop. For the sun, and the clouds, and the soil, have pledged themselves to take care of it until it is prepared for the reaper's sickle. Your holiness may be approaching the full corn in the ear; yours may be coming towards the ear; and yours may be only in the blade. The holiness of every one of us may be exposed in the future, more than it has ever been in the past, to the blighting influences of sin. Nevertheless, the Keeper of Israel will not forsake it, the Sun of Righteousness will visit it, the Holy Spirit will be to it as the early and the latter rain, and so, in spite of all opposition, it will reach its perfectly ripened maturity.

And when will this blessed hour arrive? Not, I am fully persuaded, until death comes to us. Then we shall leave the garment of our imperfections behind us, as the prophet left his perishable mantle. A month without sin, a week without sin, a day without sin! We have never known this blessed experience; but we are to know, to realize, and to enjoy an eternity without sin. The robes which we shall put on at the gates of the Celestial Paradise will be whiter than the snow, and the fear of their being stained will never enter our minds. For as we enter those gates we shall be convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that, our faith will never be weakened, and that our love will never be blighted, since over these gates we shall see these words, which constitute the security of Heaven: "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Let no one imagine, because I have been unfolding the doctrine that believers are not made perfect until death that,

therefore I give the slightest encouragement to indolence in the Christian life. Paul did not regard himself as a perfect Christian, for he said, "Not as though I had attained, either were already perfect." Yet he was not slothful about the perfect holiness of his immortal nature, for he also said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii., 13, 14. As the avaricious man struggles to grasp the gold, so Paul struggled to grasp the mark, the glorious mark, of absolute perfection. And every Christian, now hearing me, should imitate the Apostle in his heavenly ambition. Let purity be our grand and constant aim. To realize it let us adopt all the means in our power. Then, while the beauty of our growing holiness will speak more eloquently for Christ than the tongue of the most gifted orator, it will be to ourselves, and to others, a sure indication that we are rising to those balmy and sunny heights where unspotted holiness shall reign for ever and ever.

IV.—Death is gain to the Christian because it is a change from imperfect to perfect society.

We love solitude at times because it enables us to strengthen our intelligence, to mellow our wisdom, to fortify our courage, to increase our love, to mend our nets of usefulness, to rest from labour, and to examine ourselves as candidates for eternity in the sacred presence of God. From the secret vale of seclusion we must, however, often go forth, not only because we have duties to perform on the broad and busy arena of life, but also because we are social beings, and, therefore, long to see the faces and listen to the voices of others. Into no circle can we go as Christians, and there find everything which is lovely and of good report. Go to the Church. How often there do we hear the noise and din of controversies, schisms, and jealous rivalries, and how often there do we see Ephraim envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim. Nor is this all. Have you not requested the friendly counsel of some Christian, perhaps a member of the same church with yourself, and it has been withheld? Have you not desired to open your heart to another Christian, that you might be somewhat relieved of the heavy burdens which

were pressing you down, and he has almost chilled you by his cold formality and freezing indifference? Yea, your heart may have been deeply wounded more than once, by the trickery, the treachery and the fraudulence of some who quoted Scripture, sang hymns, appeared devotional, and spoke of the sweet promises of the Gospel. The friendship of saints is imperfect, the communion of saints is imperfect. We are not fully satisfied with the graces of our Christian brethren, and we are persuaded that they are not satisfied with ours. Here all our gifts imperfect are, but a better day draws nigh, and when it comes what a superior society we shall enjoy, and how lovingly we shall be welcomed into every circle. I have thought of the inhabitants of heaven, and compared them to a number of constellations. They are in companies, and they are so according to their ages, affinities, and the services which they have rendered to Christ. Here are the angels who ministered so constantly, and so lovingly to the heirs of salvation. There are the martyrs wearing their brilliant crowns, and near to them is a group who are shining like the stars of the firmament. It is composed of those who have turned many to righteousness. Yonder are the seers who stood on the mount of prophecy, and pointed their generations to the better and the brighter days that were coming, and not far from them are the patriarchs who endeavoured to serve God while the world was yet young. Here is a company of the redeemed, and amongst them we recognise some old and well known friends. How vastly are they improved since we last saw them! Where is the unforgiving spirit of Samuel, the disagreeable temper of James, the pride of Stephen, the fault-finding tendency of Martha, the irritability of Jane, and the fickleness of Susan? These, and all the rest of their imperfections have departed, to return no more for ever. With some of those old friends we fell out in the way of our earthly pilgrimage. Will this be practically remembered by them and us? O no; like our sins against God, they will be buried in the depths of forgetfulness, and by these old friends we shall be received with a geniality of love, such as we never experienced before. Yonder is a larger and exceedingly interesting number. It is made up of little children, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; and some of them we can call our own. Never do

they tease each other now, never do they quarrel with each other now, and never are they a source of anxiety and sorrow to others now. Were they comparatively free from sin while here? They are now free from it entirely. Were they happy while here? They are now completely happy. Did they throw a sunny gladness around our homes? O what a radiant joy do they shed across the heavenly home! The most sincere and unselfish reception which we have ever received in this world was from children; but what a welcome they will give us when we arrive on the other side of Jordan! And the most cordial welcome will be given to those fathers and mothers who have children there. Even the little ones, who never delighted a mother's heart by lisping her name on earth, will in heaven know her and call her mother; and so the hopes which withered around that mother's heart when her lovely flower faded and died, will become green again when the same flower is laid upon her bosom, fresh and fair and sparkling with the dewdrops of immortality. To all those various groups we shall be introduced, and we shall find that while everyone of them is perfectly holy everyone of them is likewise our attached and ardent friend. Great is the contrast between the flower and the seed, but far greater is the difference between the society of earth and the society of heaven. The one is imperfect and frequently embittered, the other is perfect, and always radiant with joy. In speaking of the society of heaven we have been, as yet, like the astronomer, who would discourse about the stars, and say nothing of the sun, since we have not referred to Jesus, who is in the midst of it all as its glory and life. We love Him above all others, for what He is, for what He has done, for what He is doing, and for what He will continue to do for us; and although we have never seen Him we shall yet gaze upon His countenance, listen to His voice, and participate in His friendship. More than all the crowns, the harps, and the white robes of heaven; yea, more than all the inhabitants of heaven, does the fact that Jesus is there, and that we shall spend with Him our higher, our brighter, and our eternal life, add weight, value, and bliss to the society of heaven. And what keeps us from the full enjoyment of this society? It is death. Others, therefore may shrink from it, and wish ~~never~~ to meet it, but

we will not, and cannot do this, since we can individually say, "For me to die is gain."

We must all die, and everyone of us must die for himself and herself. Affectionate friends can do many things for us, but to die for us, even supposing they were willing, is beyond their power. Individually we must somewhere and at some time meet the last enemy, feel his icy hand, and be conquered by him. Let me put this solemn and important question to all, "Will death be a gain to you?" If you are not a true Christian, it will not, and it cannot be. Instead of being a gain it will be a terrible and an eternal loss. It will take you from every stream of pleasure to which you now go, to that lurid abode where there is no pleasure. It will take you from every circle of friendship which you now visit, to that dismal region where friendship does not exist. It will take you from all those instrumentalities and agencies by which you can rise to a high and holy life, to that dark domain where everyone is descending. It will take you from this world of hope, to that world, the firmament of which has not and never will have a single star. What an awful transition! what a terrific loss! They have a height which we cannot reach, a depth we cannot fathom, and a length and breadth we cannot measure. Can you escape from them? You may, you can, but you can only do so by being delivered from sin. And since there is only one thing which, under Divine Power, can deliver you from sin, I entreat you to fix your hearts and minds upon it now. It is the blood of Christ; for that alone, says the voice of inspiration, cleanseeth from all sin. Believe that it was shed for you; and O Divine Spirit, enable them to do this. Then when we come to bid farewell to the world, we shall individually say, "For me to die is gain."





REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

THANKFULNESS.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."—
Romans i. 21.

GRATITUDE, though varying in its elements, is always of the nature of love, or praise, or both. It is a yearning of the feelings toward one that has done us good. It is the heart's attempt, by grateful feeling, to pay back a service; to give happiness again to another in some way on account of happiness received. It is the spontaneous effort, then, of a noble nature to requite a kindness. It is tribute, or heart-money. There are those who are very slow and torpid, and who recognise as favours chiefly those things which feed their appetites. There are those to whom you shall gain access almost only through their senses. I need not say that these are but just one step above the brute creation. In capacity man is far lifted above the brute creation, but in fact there be many men that live who do not seem to reach so high as many of the more intelligent and more grateful animals. The horse and the dog are far more grateful and more noble, often, than the men that own them. There are those who are willing enough to receive favours, but who are so selfish that they feel very little response. With them the least thanks are enough for the greatest obligation. They are eager, greedy, and hard-hearted. They are everlastingly hungry for benefits, but the more you give them, the more they expect. The more you do, the more they demand. And continuity of favour works in them a sense of expectation, rather than a sense of thankfulness. Beggarly and mean they are. There are those whose pride leads them to accept favours as their due. They have such an overweening conception of their own merit that nothing comes quite up to

their deserts ; and they receive benefactions as if they were debts paid. There are men so high that even God never hands anything down to them. They stoop to take favours from the very hand of their Maker, as if they felt above Him, and as if everything came up to their eminence and excellence. Thus, instead of a lively gratitude, there is an exacting and always unthankful pride in such natures. For pride is bottomless. Though you were to pour into its vortex a thousand years, it would be no nearer filled than at first. There is no end to it. But, above these, we find men of true gratitude ; and yet, there is a great difference in this affection, even among those that may be called grateful, rising up from the lower and the baser natures. With some the disposition is exquisite. The least drop of dew will make the grape-blossom sweet. The least moisture will make the mignonette report itself through all the garden. The honeysuckle does not ask much. The night-dews are enough for it. And there are some natures that take but the slightest favours to make them exhale thanks and gratitude. There are others that require much. Gratitude works, also, with different degrees of expression and fulness of action in different natures. In some, favours are very soon forgotten. They are very sensitive for the moment, but their sensibilities fade out. In others, never. With some, gratitude is like the new-fallen snow, exquisite ; but, like it, it very soon dissolves and passes away. With others, gratitude is like the diamond, once formed, hard and enduring, brilliant, and from every facet sending radiance. In some, gratitude excites uneasiness and unrestfulness till in some way it can discharge obligation. In others, there is no such thing as discharging the obligation for a favour. There are some men to whom if you do them a kindness the feeling is that they can repay it. There are others who feel that a kindness done to them binds them to the doer evermore. In some, a neglect, a disfavour, an injury, real or supposed, or even a justice that is severe, cancels all past kindness towards those who have done them good. But in others, a kindness received, full, rich, and heartfelt, can never be eclipsed by any after conduct. Even when circumstances may separate men, so that their subsequent lives run contrary or apart, yet in grateful and loving natures there can be no sinking,

nor losing, nor effacing the memory of a past kindness or a past love. Among the Alps, when the day is done, and twilight and darkness are creeping over fold and hamlet in the valleys below, Mont Rosa and Mont Blanc rise up far above the darkness, catching from the retreating sun something of his light, flushed with rose-colour, exquisite beyond all words, or pencil, or paint, glowing like the gate of heaven. And so past favours and kindnesses lift themselves up in the memory of noble natures, and long after the lower parts of life are darkened by neglect, or selfishness, or anger, former loves, high up above all clouds, glow with divine radiance, and seem to forbid the advance of night any further.

Men are accustomed to judge each other by these tests of gratitude. An ungrateful nature is under the sentence of condemnation of the whole world. Men everywhere, in all ages, have agreed that to feel thankful, to be grateful, is to be noble—and the reverse.

It is perfectly fair and right, then, that God should demand at our hands gratitude for mercies received, and that He should expect it to be in some proportion to the benefits conferred. And it is perfectly fair that we should attempt to measure human character and human conduct by this expectation of God. We measure men by a standard which none deny—which all admit—when we measure their conduct and character by the laws of gratitude.

I purpose, then, in the further prosecution of this discourse, to make inquiries into the character and conduct of every one in this presence, measured by this rule.

And I ask, in the first place, Has thankfulness to God been in any proportion to the benefits received? Has thankfulness accompanied every day's benefaction, and measured the mercies that you have received? Has thankfulness ever been a common experience, lively and quick? Has it acted to promote obedience? Has it had the effect to make you sensitive to God's feelings and to God's wishes? The children of unnumbered kindnesses, the objects of countless mercies, covered all over with memorials of God's tender thought and kind consideration, have the blessings of God that have been from the heavens poured out, copious as the light; that have streamed through all the avenues of life

abundant as the floods of the ocean—have these blessings of God that have watched you from youth up to this hour, and that have flowed through all the channels of your life, ever brought forth in you a profound sense of recognition? Have they ever made you yearn to requite God? Have they ever led you to considerations of the obedience and gratitude due from you to Him? Is not what the apostle declares applicable to us? Are we not despising the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not considering that the goodness of God is leading us to repentance? But let us more in detail look into this matter.

(1.) Let us look at a man's own organization, and inquire in what way he is wont to receive that as a comprehensive and complex gift of God. It is no small thing that we have an organization that brings health and strength—the absence of pain and the positive presence of pleasure. There are many that are born to misfortune, to trial, to trouble. They carry organized suffering with them. That, for the most part, is not our condition. We are born so that our whole life is strong, and our body vigorous, with various pleasure. The separate elements that go to constitute this gift of our organization are marvellous, if we consider them in detail. If the eye could keep a journal of all the pleasures that it has brought to us, if it could make a representation of what it is capable of yet bringing, if the gift that God has conferred upon us in the eye could be adequately described, no tongue could measure our obligations. If the ear could give its account of pleasures issued; if not a single sense merely, but the whole of our body could rise up and bear witness to God's goodness in its organization, what a history, what a complex series of services from God to us would be exhibited?

What is the habit of our mind? Are the body and the gifts of God that we receive through it accepted, day by day, with a profound sense of obligation and of thanksgiving to God? On the contrary, are not life, and health, and strength, more frequently a reason of indifference? The poor humpbacked cripple often thanks God; whereas the man whose free blood beats without a pain, the man that carries his body so as scarcely to know that there is more than spirit to his life, uses it for vanity, for pride, for worldli-

ness, and for pleasure—rarely for devotion. When sickness comes, and the man begins to feel the sources of strength draining away; when he begins to come under the hand of the nurse, then he thinks of his obligation to God, and puts up some sentimental thanks, and begins to express regret and penitence, and makes promises—oh how many, and how nugatory! For we write our sick-bed promises in water; and when we are well again they are not to be found. When we return again to health and throw our crutch and staff, and the various memorials of weakness in the past, with them go the tendencies to thanks and gratitude. And the history of a man's life in respect to the gifts of God that come to him through his physical endowments, is a history of independence by reason of favours received, without scruple, of God's royal bounty expressed in hand, in foot, in throbbing heart, in sensitive nerve, in strong bone, and in live muscle. All the senses that God has put together to create the most noble thing made under the heaven—we take them as a gift, of course. We arrogate to ourselves personal beauty, if we are handsome; personal strength, if we are strong; personal skill, if we have a hand to execute. We take all these sovereign gifts of God not with thanksgiving, not as if they brought us nearer to Him in sweet obedience, not as benefits received; but to set us apart from Him, to separate us from Him, and from our service to Him.

Is it not so? Is it not so in those that you look upon around about you? and is it not so with you? Is there a man here that is not obliged to lay his hand upon his heart in acknowledgment, and say, "I have been ungrateful even in the matter of my bodily life; my life has been marked by ingratitude to God; I have never rendered thanks for the many favours that I have received at His hands."

(2.) Look at the gifts of God expressed in the human mind and disposition. These seldom form the basis of thought—much less of thanks. We are neither thankful for the casket nor for the jewels that God has put within the casket. Indeed, the more men have, usually, the less apt are they to be grateful. Men are apt to become vain, arrogant, worldly, and foolish in the possession of their mental gifts and powers. We bitterly inveigh against princes who use their power for the oppression of their subjects; but there

are no princes so royally endowed as those whom God makes eminent by mental gifts.

What is the history of the human race in this regard? That the highest are the humblest? That the richest by the gift of God inwardly are the most loving, the most gentle, the most sensitive to divine favour? That those whom God has lifted nearest to Him, stand furthest from Him. We are very often apt to be grateful when we receive some temporal gift, when some impending mischief is removed from our temporal prosperity; but we carry about, in reason, in flashing imagination, in hope, in love, in sympathy, in everything that goes to make up the human disposition, that wonderful, that always marvellous gift of God, the human soul, that is touched with immortality, that once kindled burns for ever, radiant past all comparison of sun, or star, or lesser things like these—we carry this from the cradle to the grave, and scarcely think to thank God or to love Him for His benefaction.

(3.) Look at our social advantages. It is no small thing to have been born in a Christian land. How many of us find occasion for real thankfulness in this? It is no small thing to have been born of Christian parentage—to have been born of parents whose name it is an honour to bear—to come of a lineage which is a witness to God's kindness and mercy. There are many children of Christian parents here. There are many here who could not count the obligations that they are under, in God's good providence, simply for birth and parentage. It is a thing which the devout heart should not fail to ponder, and which a sensitive mind should not fail to feel. It is a great thing to have been put into this life through a right gate. If it be a golden gate covered all over with glorious inscriptions and legends and memories of past goodness, no man can enough thank God. Did your mother travail in faith and prayer? Were you born amid supplications? Were songs, not of angels, but of one scarcely less than angelic, around about your advent? Were you baptized in your cradle before priestly hands made aspersion of water? Did you come forth into life from out of a household of faith? It is no small thing that God nested you thus, and that He gave you such a parentage and such a beginning in life. Have you ever made it an object of thought?

Our honourable connections are matters of no small moment, as they stand intimately related to our prosperity, and that without which our prosperity is of little worth—our happiness. The position we are permitted to occupy in society we are apt to ascribe to our own skill and work. But it should not be ascribed to these things alone. There is not a man living that has really achieved the social advantages which he has. There is a providence in them. There is a personal element, to be sure, in favour of right doing; but, after all, there is a providence likewise in these things; and whether they come directly through our own instrumentality or the intervention of others, there is a divine element in them which calls upon every noble nature for recognition and for gratitude.

And all that which we have of repute, of ease, of influence, of power, of consequence by reason of our social connection—does not this tend to puff us up? How many men requite God by being to others exactly what He is not to them? God, though lifted up, and standing in everlasting glory, has not disdained to take heed to us, and lend us something of His eminence. We take that eminence, whether given in endowments, in social connection, in power, or in influence, to separate between us and all below. God fills up the void between us and Him, by love and mercy. God bridges the way from His heart to ours by kindnesses without number; and we, partaking of these benefactions, swell up, and become proud and arrogant and self-sufficient. We look down upon men less favoured than we, and seem to say, "Stand thou there: come not near to touch our robes."

And how many men are there that so use their privilege and position as to confer a favour only when men kneel down and recognize their superiority in their very attitude and acts? How many of us, on the other hand, understand that every one of these gifts are love-gifts of God, and requite them in gratitude to Him, and in sympathy and like kindnesses to those who are less favoured than we?

(4.) Consider our relations to the gifts of God in nature and in human society. With every added year of my life, I increasingly feel that I cannot enough appreciate the wonderfulness of God's bounties of love registered for every one that has an eye to see, and an ear to hear, in the fulness of nature.

I think that God walks in nature the year round, more than He walked in the garden when Adam was wont to hold familiar intercourse with Him. Every year I live, I thank God that he opens my senses to the recognition of His presence in nature. And the year is bountiful and beautiful because God is in it, in summer, in winter, in every month alike, of seed-time or harvest. Everywhere God makes Himself known to those that have a heart sensitive to His presence. And it seems to me, that we should regard the seasons, the year, and nature, as something other than a mere storehouse for our material necessities. There is something in the world besides food to eat, clothes to wear, and fuel to burn. We are built to be something more than mere animals. And the earth is built to express something more than God's provision for our body. The whole globe, it seems to me, is a sacrament; and time is full of the most solemn lessons, and the most momentous truths. And yet, we let day after day, and year after year, pass over our heads, and our constant thought is—what? That the winter is severe; that the day is inclement; that the rain incommodes our party, or mars our pleasure. We sit and judge of the various events of the seasons with reference to our selfish convenience. We fret, and fume, and complain of God's phenomena, judging them by our wishes, and without thanksgiving, or admiration, or gratitude, or reverence, but full of spite and peevishness and ill-feeling.

The successes of life, by which men attain livelihood, affluence, influence, and the respect of men—all these are in reality gifts of God, and not the less subjects of gratitude because they depend upon our activity, since our activity again depends upon God's being ever present with us. Nor are they less subjects of gratitude because they depend upon natural law. Is a kindness made perpetual and universal less kind and good than if it were occasional and partial? If God once did you a kindness, would that be more a subject of gratitude than if He meant it to be everlasting, and fixed it in the shape of a law? Suppose I should invite a poor landless man into my orchard, and say to him, "Select, pluck, eat, and bear away," and I should find in time that he discharged himself from all obligations of gratitude, on the plea that my gifts were gifts that were organised in

nature, and that my fruits grew on the trees by natural laws, and had no relation to me! Suppose he should be more vain of his skill in picking out the best fruits, and plucking them down safe and unharmed to his basket than of my benefaction! So it is with men, in respect to the gifts of God. God invites them to all the bounties of nature, and they are more vain of their skill to reap them than thankful for the bounties themselves.

(5.) Regard the work of God in providences towards every one of us. It is not revealed in this life as it shall be, and yet there is perpetually a discipline of providence, a discipline of care, a ministration of sorrow. There are gifts of prosperity and gifts of adversity; there are sparing mercies in sickness and danger to us, and, what comes nearer to a sensitive nature, there are sparing mercies to others. The providence of God that attends our daily walk and our daily life, is marvellous to him that has an eye to discern all its details, and wisdom to comprehend its full meaning. But we walk through the day, the week, the month, the year, often, without having a thought, or scarcely a reminiscence. In our hours of meditation, when we attempt to search the past for arguments of gratitude, how little do we experience a sense of thanksgiving to God for all His abounding mercies in providence! I think among the marvels of the other life will be the wonder that we should have walked through this so insensible, so heedless, so ignorant, and so thankless.

(6.) Consider God's spiritual dealings with us. The gift of Christ, that richest and divinest of all gifts, and the promise through Him of eternal life, and of help in every time of need; the privilege of communion; the ministration of angels; the gift of the Holy Ghost; God's tenderness; God's gentleness; His matchless delicacy in dealing with us, taking no advantage of power or position; His mindfulness of every feeling in us, though we are mindless of any feeling in Him—in all these spiritual blessings, gratitude and thankfulness are the exception, and not the rule. We are neglectful of God's chiefest mercies. We waste them, cast them aside, resist them even. Often and often the hearts of men are inflamed against God by the pressure upon them of these most eminent mercies addressed to their noblest faculties.

In view, then, of these mercies, let me ask you, Is there a man here that could acquit himself if I were to charge home upon every one of you guilt of sin ; if I were to declare that your character was stained through and through with sinfulness ? Is there a man here that could repel the charge ? There is no one thing that you admit to be a fairer measure of character and life than this principle of gratitude ; and when you take it and measure your course of conduct, not toward an inferior, not toward an equal, not toward a mere superior, but toward God—the highest, the noblest, the most disinterested, the sweetest, and the best being that ever lived—no man, not even the purest, can help feeling that he has lived a life of ingratitude. God's wonderful bounties have come before you unrecognised. You have made yourself selfish through God's kindnesses. You have made yourself proud through His goodness. You have separated yourself from your fellows by reason of His distinguished gentleness and kindness to you. The things that were meant to enrich you have made you poor. The things that were meant to deepen your affections have made them shallow and filled them up with sediments. The very things that were meant to draw you to God have built around you walls of defence and of separation between yourselves and God.

It does not need that men should lay to their consciences the charge of theft, of crime, or of offences. There is no offence any more guilty than the want of gratitude to God. That I charge upon every heart here. If there be a single soul that says, "I need no repentance, no change of heart : I am not a sinner," I lay this charge upon him, and he cannot resist it. There is no one that can resist the results of measurement by this test. We are all guilty before God of ingratitude. We have never been adequately thankful for the bounties that we have received. We cannot receive from our father and mother a love-token and not know it ; but from Christ we can. We cannot take a poor and despised gift—despised as perishable, earthly, and transient—from a fellow's hand, without feeling a sentiment of honour and requital ; but from God's hand we take royal bounties without any such consciousness.

Ah ! when Christ takes His own heart, broken, wounded,

bleeding, His sacrifice and His love, and brings it to us, and makes it a present; when, out of His own misery, out of His own degradation, and out of His own suffering, He proposes to lift us up into everlasting bounty and benefit, is there no requital, are there no thanks, is there no gratitude due? When God requires the service of our life and the fulness of our heart, is it an exacting requisition? Does the mother expect too much when she demands that the child that she has reared shall love and serve her? Does the father expect too much when he looks for reverence and love at the hands and heart of his child? If you have given your time to nurse the sick, is it too much to expect that when they come to health they will kindly remember you? If a man is about to be destroyed, and you step between him and his peril, and rescue him, is it strange that you should expect at least kindness and love from him? If, when the raging flood is sweeping a man on to a watery grave, you should plunge into the sea and save him, is it strange that after you have brought him without harm to the shore you should expect from him at least kind remembrance and affectionate regard? If, in bringing him in, a black wave should strike you, and you should be swept out, and should perish, while you saved him, would it be strange that you should feel in the very expiring moments of your life the obligation on his part to celebrate this act of philanthropy by which his life was saved while yours was lost? It would not be. The untutored savage would never forget such a benefactor. It requires Christians, men educated in the knowledge of the death of Christ, who died that they might live, to refuse to requite service with gratitude.

I am ashamed when I think how we find dissatisfaction where we should find satisfaction; how we extract bitterness where we should find sweetness; how we create stench where we should find perfume; how we strive to make ourselves unhappy in the very relations where God meant that we should be blissful. I am ashamed to think how we find argument for sullenness, for complaint, and even for charge against God, who has rounded out the world in mercy, fed us with his bounty, and clothed us personally in kindness. When I think how God has borne in upon our spiritual life the promises of help, and fulfilled those promises from day

to day, from week to week, from month to month, and from year to year, and how we have met the acts of His goodness towards us with selfishness, and pride, and complaints, I am ashamed of myself and of my kind. God has not deserved such treatment at our hands.

I ask you, then, my friends, is there one of you that does not need to go before God in repentance? Is there one of you that can look upon His position and say, "I owe no acknowledgment and no thanks to God?" Is there nothing that you ought to pray about? Have you nothing to say to God, to-night, in your closet? Have you no mercies to make mention of? Have you no thanks to offer? Have all God's dealings with you left you nothing for honour and nothing for thanks? I beseech of you, look well at this. For when we arise in the last day, be sure that neglected mercies—be sure that divine kindnesses that have excited no gratitude—will rise up and be swift witnesses against us. When we stand before God and look back upon our whole life, then to hear him say, and be not able to contradict it, "Ye were unfaithful"—that itself would be enough to exclude us from heaven; that itself would be a weight of condemnation which no man could bear.

Here, then, let our hearts begin to learn more and more to give thanks and love for benefits received, until at last we are permitted to stand before God, and to echo every thought of love by love, not according to the greatness of his nature, but according to the fulness and strength of our own. Amen.





REV. JOHN THOMAS.

UNITED PRAYER :

AS A MEANS OF GRACE AND AN INSTRUMENT OF SERVICE FOR
CHRIST.;

A THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, GIVEN IN ST. JOHN'S WOOD
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

BY THE REV. JOHN THOMAS.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."—*Matthew xviii., 19.*

THAT prayer *is* a means of grace is not a matter of simple faith to the Christian. Experience of the most positive and unmistakable kind puts the question out of the realms of mere belief altogether. Not only does experience confirm the numerous and direct assertions of Scripture relative to the Divine recognition of and answers to prayer, but the Christian enjoys a positive consciousness of spiritual enlightenment,—an increase of faith in God,—and the blessedness of the Divine nearness, as among the inseparable results of faithful praying; and so it becomes impossible for him to doubt the reality of the grace that he obtains in the exercise. But it will be well to say at once that this is not *the* object for which the duty and privilege of prayer is appointed. However much the simple *exercise* of prayer may seem to re-act for the spiritual advantage of the soul by which it is performed, it is altogether a misinterpretation of the inten-

tion of God in the ordinance to call it a "SPIRITUAL GYM-NASTIC," as I once heard a Christian brother designate it. I have not taken prayer in the abstract for my subject this evening—nor prayer in the essentially private phases of it, with which we as separate believers have to do. I call your attention to prayer as a common force employed for common ends, by a greater or lesser number of believers—*United* prayer. And here, again, I propose to limit my scope in order to confine your thoughts upon two very important and distinct uses to which this class of prayer may be very successfully put. My subject, as you know, is—"United prayer as a means of grace, and an instrument of service for Christ."

Now, let me first state what I understand by united prayer. The simple circumstance that supplication is offered openly, and among a number of praying people, does not necessarily constitute united prayer. Neither is the mere fact that members of a number of different Christian denominations are met together in one building to pray, of *itself* a sufficient guarantee that real united prayer is being offered. But when two or more believers do consent, and determine together upon the subject for petition, and with harmony of motive, object, and faith, do spread their one petition before the Lord, then I believe the act to be of united prayer. This is an *agreeing* to ask—a deliberate and intelligent purpose, being deliberately and intelligently carried out. You will see that it is not an imperative condition that those who unite should be in the same place, nor even pray at the same time. But, while that is the case—it is of great importance that believers should *often* meet in one place, to offer together their prayers and praises before God. And though not an essential to the fact, it is perhaps the strongest evidence of it, since it will always be found that where a strong desire for blessing, and a strong agreement upon it exists among the members of a Christian organization, those members meet often together, in the body as well as in the spirit, for the purpose of praying together openly as well as in heart. Sometimes two are agreed to ask a thing of God, but they cannot meet on a given time at a given place,—thank God that, this being the case, they yet offer united prayer in a sense upon which the promise of Christ unmis-

takably rests. They agree to ask, and it is done to them. They may live at the opposite poles, but they have a common desire—they have agreed to make it a subject for prayer, and the God who is just as near the one heart as the other sees the connection, the harmony, the *oneness* of the appeal to Himself, and replies according to the faithful promise of His word.

I. *I will claim your thought first upon the statement that United Prayer is to those who exercise it a means of Grace."*

Of course, in this, the essential qualities of prayer are as definitely and prominently present as when the supplicant is alone with God. Each unit in the number of souls so united must be as truly possessed by all that is required for the individual act of prayer, as would be the case did he or she appear as the sole responsible petitioner. Individuality is not lost, is not subordinated—is, if that were possible, the more distinctly defined. This must not be misunderstood. It is the evil of all organizations, that the responsibility of the units is merged into the corporate responsibility—hence, by degrees, so far as individuals are concerned, that personal accountability is lost sight of, until, there being no *one* recognizably open to charge or to censure—the general body becomes practically irresponsible too. Union and harmony must ever be associated with distinct individuality of conscience, and of heart, if this idea is to be carried out. The individual must be the more faithful to his own responsibility, from the fact that in his agreement with another, he has led that other to confide in *him*, in the most solemn and sacred trust that one man could commit to another. If he fails here, he is dishonourable, not only to his cause, his God, and his own conscience, but he is faithless to his friend and brother, whom he has induced to confide in him. So far then as those who are "agreed to ask" are concerned, they each must have the consciousness of strong desire—the importunate spirit of supplication—and the simple submissive faith in God, that are the recognized elements of prayer, when the inner spirit of man shuts to the door, and prays to the Father who seeth in secret.

I. Now, in recognizing this, you will get a cue to the advantages to be derived from united prayer as an agency

for personal and relative spiritual advancement. Whatever brings a Christian face to face with his power with God, his influence with man, and his responsibility as a member of the brotherhood of Christ, that occasion is so far a means of grace to him. These three conditions are most definitely indicated in the exercise we are considering. And they are so indicated, like a threefold cord, each strand of which is equally required to complete the whole. Let me illustrate. United Prayer being accepted as what I have described it to be, take this instance—Two members of this assembly have agreed to ask for the conversion of a third person. Here is a deliberate compact made to bring power to bear for the accomplishment of a desire—but upon what, or whom? Upon God. Now, this is something *more than* the outbursting cry of a burdened heart—it is the recognition of power put into the possession of reconciled children, based upon unfailing promises, that directly apply to them. Those two brethren are thus brought face to face with the gracious truth, that they *have* power with God. And they are at the same time, and by the same act of agreement to pray, brought practically to the recognition of the influence one Christian has with, or *over* another, even in relation to that which is most sacred, and that may involve the most momentous issues. The inter-dependence of believers, even in the matter of prayer itself, being thus practically enforced, *compels* the recognition of the common dependence upon the elder-brother—the God Man Christ Jesus—the *One Mediator*. And, these agreeing brethren further, in that very act of united prayer, are brought under conditions the most favourable for the fullest appreciation of their accountable and deeply sympathetic relationship with the common fraternity—the centre and life of which is the SON OF GOD—the SON OF MAN—the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Now I cannot conceive of conditions more favourable for the development of the finer and nobler spiritual qualities of these two brethren. I cannot imagine any *one exercise* that will so fully *impress* them with all that is involved in their Christian life and profession, and therefore, with the very personal and practical relationship they hold with God and man, as this exercise of united prayer. And, given that this is so, it is a means of grace of no ordinary

value. It will be a means of grace on other grounds, however, than those I have shewn.

2. United prayer strongly tends to draw out the souls of those engaged therein in sympathy, and care, and love for one another, and for Christians generally—leads to the recognition of the truth, that wants, sorrows, trials, temptations, joys, and other feelings are marvellously the same in character, and perhaps even in extent in the experience of each and all, and so the strong original bias towards selfishness or self-containedness is weakened more and more, and the true Christian union in which the bearing of one another's burdens shares so large a part becomes increasingly a tangible fact, and less and less a mere Sunday sentiment. If *this* is not a means of grace to those who are so exercised, then I have studied the whole question in vain. What is more ennobling than the power that overcomes selfishness, and strengthens practical sympathy with others? Again, I argue the truth of my position on yet other grounds, being anxious to establish it. The *exercise* of united prayer tends powerfully to keep the *object* before the mind—to *maintain* the *act* of prayer in its vigour and importunity—to *encourage* the believers so engaged to *persevere*—and, what is of paramount importance, to preserve a consistency between the avowed and agreed petition, and all the other phases of active Christian life, or of recognized Christian fellowship. You can easily see how an hour might be well spent in the amplification of this series of grounds—but I am satisfied that the mere statement of them is sufficient to indicate their importance as bearing upon the spiritual advancement and ennobling of the believer—and that, if *you* can see their connection, as I do, with the exercise of united prayer, you will admit that such an exercise is in very deed a means of grace. Many other things might easily be shewn, all supporting the same position, but you are, happily, too well acquainted with united prayer, experimentally, to need them. I am content, then, to pass on to the other section of the subject, merely saying that the use of such an accessible and unmistakably fruitful *means* of *grace* should be the persevering aim of every believer.

II. *The second proposition is, that United Prayer is an instrument of service for Christ.*

Now, however much stress may be, and ought to be, laid upon the foregoing view of the effects of this exercise (and the importance of it as a means of grace cannot be exhausted by any human language or thought), I think that united prayer takes its highest place, as an agent used by the disciples of Jesus, in the fulfilment of work for Him. That every believer is bound by the most sacred responsibilities to serve Christ, to serve Him to the very utmost of power and opportunity, and so to serve Him under every possible circumstance, I claim to be the loyal admission of each renewed heart. There is no choice about it. It is not left to be a matter of our own arranging. We are not our own—"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord's." Consecration to Christ, in life and service, is an inseparable part of Christianity; indeed, this being the necessary outcome of the relationship of the believer to his Saviour, it *is* Christianity itself. So that we have not to discuss service as such, or *degrees* of service, for body, soul, and spirit—all for which Christ died—all that is redeemed by His blood, is pressed into service. My position is, that the fullest service of which we are capable being required of us—and the use, to that end, of all and every means or instrument put within our reach, being a duty unalterably laid upon us, united prayer *is* an instrument for the service of Christ.

1. The legitimacy of this position will be seen if I just state the nature of some of the phases of service to which Christians are so imperatively called. I may first point to the cultivation of personal spiritual life; the fostering, and guarding, and nurturing of the new nature; bringing forth fruits of righteousness, and elevating the faculties of the soul to the atmosphere of the diviner life, and engaging them in the exercises of an inner godliness, making them serving priests in the inner temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. But, while I believe that, even here, in this intensely personal and spiritual realm of Christ—a phase of service which is as leaven that, working out, leavens the whole life, till, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God"—even here, united prayer may become a strong helping instrument; yet it is not *especially* to this phase of service that I desire to apply it chiefly now.

2. There is the development and maintenance of the true nature, status, and influence of the Church of Christ, both as regards its inner life—that is, the relations between its membership as such, and that membership with Christ—and as regards its outer life—that is, the relation it bears with the world, with sin, and with the law of God. In the inner life of the Church believers are called upon, as part of their service for Christ, to maintain and advance the purity, holiness, union, and love of the membership. There *each other's* spiritual life is a matter for watchful care and unceasing solicitude,—*there* the maintenance of the harmony and peace and love of the whole is the blessed requirement laid upon the heart of each; advancement and perfection in *these* matters is service rendered to Christ. Each member is bound to render it—no one individual dares to put this duty upon another—each unit shares the burden of the whole, and no one else *can* do his part. This being so, united prayer is a very precious instrument for its accomplishment. You *agree* to ask God for such grace and help as are needed to do this momentous work. You ask Him, together by common consent, by intelligent and deliberated purpose. You are *one* in the act of prayer for this great result in the inner life of your Church, and the first principles of consistency demand that every action, and every relationship be in strict accordance with the prayer. You scarcely *could* fail in this particular, if fully engaged in the exercise of what I have already told you I believe to be united prayer. I have said as part of that inner service there is also the maintenance of the relations between the membership and Christ. Now, that close fellowship with Jesus, which is His desire and the believer's privilege, is maintained in *prayer*—such prayer as cannot be offered if the membership be not *one* as a body. Here, then, the advantage of united prayer as an instrument for the aid of believers in this branch of service must be very apparent. We come as a body—the body of Christ—with one purpose, longing, and hope; and, cemented together by this the firmest bond, we, as it were, lay hold upon Christ, and, not one here and another there, but all alike, are one *with* Christ, as well as one *in* Him. United prayer tends forcibly to the accomplishment of such a vital and

experimental union, and with it, thus consummated, a noble service is rendered for Christ—the ultimate fruits of which are unspeakable—are infinite in their extent. Then, in the *outer* life of the Church, a life that, like that of the individual Christian, is in *itself* the reflection of the inner life, but in its *effects*, something more than that reflection—the same holds good—for by what force like that of united prayer can the influence of *example*, of brotherly love, of godliness, of co-operative sympathy, and of self-rendering to Christ, be focused and directed to the work of the world's evangelization? What like *united* prayer would separate the *Church* from sin, and bring Christ's members into an active and unceasing exemplification of His own assertion.—“*They* are not of the world, even as *I* am not of the world.” The *strength* of union, thus directed, would do more to keep the disciples of Jesus unspotted from the world, under the blessing of God, than perhaps any one other agency. This distinctiveness of character and life, and antagonism to sin, is necessary, before it is *possible* that the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Hence, that which eminently assists the Church to the possession and demonstration of such distinctness of character, aim, and life from those of the natural state of mankind, must be an instrument of service for Christ; and this appears more clearly still as we remember that, in all this outer action or life of the Church, its members are simply doing their best to fulfil the law of God—not for justification, but in love.

3. Another phase of service is recognised in the direct effort to *save souls*. And the point to which I have come, is the order in which this aspect of active consecration most fitly takes its place. It is beginning at the wrong end, to seek to *save men* before a *personal* sanctification, and a *personal* separation from the conditions in which lost men are entailed, have been the purpose of earnest and scriptural effort. Men pray in vain for the baptism of the Holy Ghost to save sinners, who seek Him not, to sanctify themselves and the Church. But that soul is culpable, that having received eternal life itself, makes no effort to secure the same gift for another. That Church is culpable, and in danger of losing its precious privileges and glories, that makes no earnest tangible effort

to win into its redeemed ranks the perishing sinners around it. It is an imperative duty, while it is a glorious privilege. Is it not a service for Christ of the highest order? A service in which angels would gladly engage, and even spend and be spent to carry it on? It is committed to us, and we recognise and receive the commission. Here, then, I believe, in an especial degree this exercise of united prayer becomes an instrument of service for Christ. Whatever difficulties may arise to make imperfect the union of purpose, heart, and effort, in some other matters, in *this* one there can be but little difficulty. The aim is to *save souls*—in other words, to secure *conversions*. There are means given—the Word of God—preaching—religious influences and agencies—prayer—all inspired with the reality and consistency of vital Godliness, and winged with faith and hope. And now, the believer has fixed his heart upon the salvation of *individuals*—conversions *must* be *individual*. These persons stand out distinctly in his thought and desire—their names are written on his heart. He states his case to another believer. He gives *him* the same vivid impressions, and the same distinct identities, as those he himself experiences—and these two determine to pray for those *persons*—those individual souls—they *agree* to ask this matter; and the fact of their so doing makes their prayers more real and definite, fills them with more power, and inspires them with stronger faith, than would probably be the case under other circumstances. Apply the same to the whole church, or to a large body of believers, and it is *impossible* that their effort to save souls should fail. Add to this the teaching, example, and promise, of the Word of God upon the matter, and I *think* you have an argument in favour of the proposition before us strong enough for the purposes we may have in view. The limits of the time at my disposal this evening forbid that I should go more fully into this subject. It *is* a great one,—one of great *practical* importance; and one that this church would do well to take into yet more careful and thoughtful consideration.

III. And now comes the question—*How shall we, as Christians, avail ourselves of this "means of grace" and "instrument of service for Christ?"* Let me guard you against the idea of using it as a "means of grace," simply—

it is a "means of grace" to *us* in proportion as we employ it as an "instrument of *service* for *Christ*." I think that is clear to you.

1. Let us seek to exercise *united prayer* for the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon our church, upon our deacons, upon the pastor. Let not general petitions satisfy us, but let there be agreement between Christian and Christian—a compact, entered into as before God, and then sacredly adhered to, that we will give God no rest until we are as men and women, and as a Church, full of the Holy Ghost and of power.

2. Let us unite in the same holy compact, to ask for the sound conversion of individuals—as men, women, and children. I do not mean only that we should do as we are always doing—pray for the salvation of souls, of men and women and children in the abstract, or the crowd, but that we should also go to God together, after agreement upon the *subject* and *persons*, and ask Him to save certain persons whom we *all* have alike in our minds, and purposes, and prayers. I tell you, my friends, that it is my honest conviction that if we do *this*, we shall have to *thank God* for the salvation and eternal life of hundreds of souls.

3. Let us unite after the same definite manner to pray for the agencies employed, that they may accomplish the avowed ends they have in view. The interest which would then be felt concerning such agencies would be of a very different kind from that which is felt now. The Sunday School would be a centre of sympathy, thought, and hope around and upon which the soul of the Church would rest like some brooding dove; and both children and teachers would receive the grace. The prayer-meetings would become the resort of largely increased numbers, because you would expect *there* evidences of the Divine presence and power such as you *now* only expect to read of in your Bible. And, to you, the preaching of the Gospel, the unfolding of the Word of Life, would be a service for God, and souls, no longer delegated to the minister's sole responsibility; but you would *know* that its power and fruitfulness depended on *your united prayers*—and if, as even *then* might sometimes be, there should seem a failure and a disappointment, *that* would drive you again to your knees, and to your God,

in heart-bursting cries for Divine power upon the preacher, and living energy in the word.

Talk of revival, brethren, *this would be* revival! The heavens would open—the spiritual rains would descend—the power of God would come forth—the liberty of soul and heart would be experienced—the cloud would roll away—and the dark and troubled, the cold and unbelieving spirit that too long has weighed us down, would vanish like chill night mist before the rising sun. Sinners would be converted to God, and all about us the question would ring in our ears from anxious lips—“Men and brethren, *what must we do?*”

My people, I call upon you to *unite in prayer*. Constitute yourselves a praying league. Agree together upon what shall be your prayer—and then *pray* until heaven is shaken by your spiritual violence—and you take it by force!

I urge you to this, in the name of *Service for Christ*. No lower consideration than this—Service for Christ!

I put this subject prayerfully and hopefully before you to-night—praying as perhaps only your pastor can, that the Holy Ghost will enlighten and direct all thought, and mould all will in the matter; and that Jesus will bring out of our service to-night the fulfilment of His own gracious designs in the Revival of the Church, and the salvation of the unsaved who are upon His people's hearts.

WELLS OF SALVATION.

By REV. THOMAS KELLY, D.D.

Wells are not easily made. They involve danger, labour, and expense. So taxing was this work, somehow, even upon his physical nature, that Jesus Christ "sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground." As the work drew near to its completion, the danger and difficulty appear to have assumed more terrible and forbidding aspects, wringing from him such expressions as, "Now is my soul troubled;" and "What shall I say?" "If it be possible let *this* cup pass." "My God! My God! why has thou forsaken me?" So dangerous, indeed, was this work that he saw it would never be completed without the offering up of himself. The last explosion, therefore, adjusted, and touched off by his own hand, involved the sacrifice of himself, without which every well would be eternally dry; and as the terrible explosion took place, the sun, in consternation, refused to shine, the sheeted dead started into life, and the earth trembled to its centre, as it flung about its gigantic shoulders the mantle of astonishment and darkness.

So peculiar was the qualification for this work that *no* being in the *universe*, but one, could work in the "wells of salvation." None could either drill, or adjust the fuse or lamp, or touch off the explosion, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Four thousand years, therefore, were spent in preparing for the work, and opening up these "wells." During that long period God did not abandon his creatures, or allow them to die of thirst. Their greatest thirst was after a sense of his favour and blessing. The element to allay this thirst he conducted into their midst through the pipes and reservoirs of the Mosaic economy, through the Aaronic priesthood, their flaming altars and sacrificial offerings for sin, which, by the way, could never make the comers thereunto perfect, or satisfied. "The wells of salvation" are protected by Almighty power and skill from the corrupting influence of the devil and wicked men. Ever since they were rounded up and curbed in by the hands of the Apostles, the frogs and rats and reptiles of infidelity and scepticism have been burrowing and croaking about them. They would gladly pollute those healing waters, and turn to worse than ipecac in the spiritual stomach of every one that "comes hither to draw." But, though seething with poison, burning with *hellish* purpose, and untiring in their efforts, they have signally failed to stop up or pollute the water of a single one of those wonderful "wells." They are as *pure* and *full* to-day as when the Apostles besought a guilty world to drink and live, to wash and be clean.



REV. G. T. PERKS, M.A.

THE MISSION OF THE PULPIT.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. G. T. PERKS, M.A.

‘By manifestations of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.’—2 Cor. iv. 2.

THE power which man exerts over his fellow-man by the exercise of speech is one of his noblest prerogatives. If this power were to be suddenly and universally suspended, life would sustain a terrible and irreparable innovation, and lose some of its purest and sweetest joys. The appointment and commission of the ministry of men for the promulgation of the Gospel was one of the last solemnities in the earthly career of the Son of God: “Jesus came and spake unto the Apostles, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” When we accompany those heralds of the Cross as they prosecute their high vocation, and mark how the light of Grecian philosophy wanes in their presence, how the political power of Rome stoops at their feet, how idol temples tremble at their approach, how barbarous nations spring into greatness at their bidding, how dead souls start into newness of life at their call, we cannot resist the conviction that there is a divinity about this office which invests it with absorbing interest and paramount importance. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

The revival of an earnest Christianity during the last century, and the aggression of the Church on the empire of paganism during the present century, furnish ample and encouraging evidence that the pulpit has still a power to

sway and a work to do. It will not be displaced by the press. The press, as a circulating medium of thought, is one of the glories of the age; and as a foe to ignorance, superstition, bigotry, intolerance, and despotism may be a valuable auxiliary to the preachers. The pulpit must not be set aside by the school. When education comprises the entire man—his body, intellect, and moral nature; when it is conducted on the basis of religious truth; and when it is prosecuted in a thoroughly Christian spirit, it contributes in an eminent degree to the success of an intelligent, thoughtful, and edifying ministry. The pulpit must not be sacrificed to the lecture-room. The lecture, as a means of diffusing popular information and of stimulating self-improvement, is serviceable; and by awakening mental activity and disclosing the wonderful works of God, is helpful rather than hostile to the preacher. But still the pulpit has its specific duties, its exclusive functions, and its permanent obligations; its origin, object, privileges, responsibilities, and issues combine to give it a uniqueness which is at once solemn and sublime. The Mission of the Pulpit, then, is the subject now before us; and it is comprehensively stated in the apostle's words: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

The mission of the pulpit is—

I. A MISSION OF THE TRUTH.

II. A MISSION TO THE CONSCIENCE.

III. A MISSION FOR GOD.

I. THE PULPIT IS A MISSION OF THE TRUTH.—In this aspect it is scarcely possible to exaggerate its importance. If we look at home, the debasing influence of sensuality, the dissipating influence of worldliness, and the blighting influence of scepticism, obscure the brightness, retard the progress, and neutralise the efficacy of the truth. If we look abroad, the corruption of apostate Churches, the inveterate unbelief of Judaism, the implacable fanaticism of Mohammedanism, the demoralising mythologies of Brahminism and Buddhism, and the destructive errors and sanguinary rites of barbarous nations, suffice to show that the mission of the truth is immediately, urgently, and universally needed. Darkness has covered the earth, and "gross darkness the people."

"I am," said Christ, "the truth." He is the "Word of God." In Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The light which flows from the face of Jesus Christ breaks the clouds and darkness which surround the throne of God and makes the unknown and invisible appear to man; it penetrates the deepest recesses of a man's fallen nature, and shows him the mournful ruin which he has suffered through sin; it disperses the shadows which veiled the ancient temple worship, and guides to Calvary, where every type is fulfilled; it pierces the gloom of the grave and the depths of eternity, and loses itself in the inaccessible light of the Divine presence. "I am the Light of the world," said Christ; "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." To diffuse this light, to manifest this truth, is the mission of the pulpit.

1. *The Truth must be Presented Clearly.* This is indicated both by the force of the word "manifestation," and by the contrast between St. Paul's conduct and that of the false teachers. They traffic with the hidden things of dishonesty; we manifest the truth. The truth as it is revealed and commended in the Word of God embraces some of the most profound and interesting problems of human thought—such as the existence of God, the creation of the world, the origin of evil, the incarnation of Christ, the overthrow of Satan, the resurrection of the dead, and the ultimate destiny of man. And that these subjects should contain some things hard to be understood is nothing surprising. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." To deny them because they are incomprehensible by man is to reject them because they are Divine. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children for ever." The things which are revealed accord with the structure and capacity of our intelligent nature; they are expressed in simple and luminous language; they are illustrated by homely and apposite simile; they are embraced in poetry, in parable, in history, and in song; they challenge the studies of an archangel, and they stoop to the lisps of a babe. "I thank

Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Who can misunderstand the precious declaration: "God is love?" Who does not respond to the statement, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God?" Who can misinterpret the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" Who is at a loss for the meaning of this Scripture: "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities?" Who ever complained of the obscurity of the words, "In my Father's house are many mansions?" These are some of the primary and fundamental principles of that truth which it is the mission of the pulpit to manifest; and why should it not be presented with that unsophisticated simplicity and undisguised transparency in which it appears in the Word of God? On the contrary, it is sometimes so encumbered with the adornments of a pompous rhetoric, so beclouded by the jargon of a vain philosophy, and so cramped by the technicalities of a cold scholasticism, that it is almost impossible either to discern its features or to feel its power. This is to hide the truth rather than manifest it. "Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house." The pulpit is a lighthouse to the world; and if the light shine dimly, or be permitted to go out, or if false lights be exhibited, struggling and storm-tossed souls will be wrecked on the heaving ocean of life, and go down in the blackness of darkness for ever. Be it ours to "hold forth the Word of Life."

2. *The Truth must be Imparted Fully.* There is a beautiful completeness in the form of sound words contained in the Scriptures—a vital and substantial unity which underlies the superficial and apparent diversity. "The Scripture cannot be broken." The false teachers referred to in the former part of this verse handled the Word of God deceitfully; they mutilated, perverted, corrupted, and impaired it. The truth must be imparted in all its simplicity, integrity, and fulness. It would, of course, be impossible to embody the details of the truth in the longest sermon; but it is quite possible to convey the essentials of the truth in the shortest sermon. Our Lord's divine and precious Sermon on the

Mount would, in its present form, scarcely occupy half an hour in its delivery, and yet it contains germs of truth which will be unfolding throughout eternity. This must be St. Paul's meaning when, addressing the elders of the church at Ephesus, he said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He had neither disguised nor compromised the truth; but, regardless alike of their smiles and frowns, he had so freely and faithfully declared it as to render their salvation attainable and their unbelief inexcusable. Such godly courage and disinterested fidelity are not the gift of nature: they proceed from the "Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." The prejudices of early religious training and the influence of denominational formularies will, without especial care, give a strong tinge of eclecticism to our conception and exhibition of the truth; and we shall be in constant danger of shaping the truth to our creeds, instead of conforming our creeds to the truth. The Socinian, the Romanist, and the Antinomian profess to find their religion in the Bible; but they break the harmony of the truth, they take it up in fragments, they embrace it in part and not as a whole. Again, the preferences and aversions of those to whom the truth has to be imparted are sometimes a temptation to the preacher to present it with studied reserve instead of unhesitating freeness. The spirituality of God's law is an offence to the sensual, the cross of Christ is an offence to the self-righteous, the new birth is an offence to the formalist, the judgment to come is an offence to the worldling. What then? Must the pulpit lower its testimony? No; we must ever be ready to maintain these doctrines which are most impugned, to enforce those duties which are most neglected, to denounce those sins which are most fashionable, and to utter those warnings which are most slighted. There is nothing more eminently calculated to counteract the sectarian strifes, the sceptical errors, and the abounding ungodliness of the times than the diffusion of the truth in its unalloyed simplicity and inexhaustible fulness.

3. *The Truth must be Proclaimed Authoritatively.* A belief in the divinity of Christian truth is in our day almost hereditary. It was not always so. The first disciples of Christ were not gradually initiated into the principles of his

religion amid the tranquil and friendly influences of domestic life. Many of them had to hate father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and their own life also, in order to be Christians. It was a work of intense and irresistible conviction with them, and it ought to be so with us. The same reasons that justified them in their choice survive to justify us. Truth is eternal. The truth of the Gospel authenticates itself as the truth of God no less by its internal nature than by its external attestations. Its doctrines, precepts, and promises commend themselves to the judgment and are adapted to the wants of every man. Indeed its self-demonstrative evidence will always carry the greatest weight to minds of a reflective temperament. Again, the signs, wonders, and divers miracles which accompanied Christianity at its outset have surrounded it with an array of impregnable defences which it is alike necessary and profitable occasionally to review. It is not more certain that the sun is the workmanship of God's hand, than that Christianity is the embodiment of his love. Every true preacher has settled this question in his own mind once for all. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." We cannot therefore waste our energies in mere apologetics; we must not regard the Gospel as a debateable topic. Christ's claims must not be litigated. When He gave his last commission to his disciples there was an air of stupendous majesty in his address, which may serve to rebuke the faintheartedness of too many of his ministers, and to remind them that they are sent not to prove the Gospel, but to *preach* it. "Teaching them," says He, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The world exists under the mediatorial dominion of the Son of God; He is Lord of lords and King of kings; power is given unto him over all flesh; He is Lord both of the dead and of the living; He demands the allegiance of every creature at the peril of his eternal interests. The truth which the pulpit has to proclaim is invested with the attributes and accompanied by the sanctions of holy, righteous and beneficent law; if you obey it from the heart you will prove that it is profitable for both worlds, but if you reject it you will be crushed by its penalties for ever.

II. THE PULPIT IS A MISSION TO THE CONSCIENCE. COR-

science is that simple and original faculty of our nature which, among other things, points us to the great laws of duty; pronounces judgment on our actions as good or bad; produces painful or pleasurable emotions in us, according to our conduct; and by its combined energy prompts us to do that which is right. It asserts its prerogative in the breast of innocent infancy, and it retains its grasp of the hoary-headed sinner; it flames with light in the dark spirit of the besotted pagan, and it reigns in serene majesty in the soul of the true Christian. "Had it strength as it had right; had it power as it had manifest authority," says Butler; "it would absolutely govern the world." It may be slighted, but it cannot be silenced; it may be resisted, but it cannot be dethroned; it may be seared, but it cannot be destroyed. The worm that dieth not is the avenging power of an infuriated conscience: a conscience lashed into madness by all that is vile in evil and intolerable in despair. The mission of the pulpit is to this awful monarch of the soul.

1. *The Mission to the Conscience has its Advantages.* The man who appeals to the conscience by the force of truth occupies a throne of imperial power, and sways a sceptre of irresistible might. If we appeal to the imagination by sallies of wit and beauty, we shall be perpetually chasing clouds and shadows; if we appeal to the reason by facts and arguments, we shall encounter a network of sophistry and scepticism; if we appeal to the passions, we shall create floods of sentimental sorrow and troops of fictitious saints; but if we appeal to the conscience by the truth, there is not a law, precept, prohibition, or warning of the Word of God to which the conscience will not instantly respond, and of which it will not instinctively approve. Here, then, is a prodigious advantage. Your ear may not be charmed by the musical cadences of a flowing eloquence; your taste may not be gratified by the beauties of elegant composition; your judgment may not be convinced by the dogmas of orthodoxy; but if the truth be held forth in its clearness, fulness, and authority, conscience will stand forth to embrace and welcome it as the voice and image of God. Conscience is the preacher's best ally. He may be regarded as an enthusiast, as a fanatic, or as a fool; but conscience will always recognise in the faithful, earnest, self-denying preacher the chosen and

anointed servant of God. "We are made manifest unto God; and we trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

2. *The Mission to the Conscience has its Difficulties.* For although conscience in its most depressed and languid condition is always on the side of God, of truth, and of righteousness, and, on this ground, will ever supply the most convincing evidence of the reality of God's moral government, and of the certainty of an eternal world, yet the decisions of conscience are against man, who is a sinner. "There is none righteous, no, not one. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Now there is in guilt an instinctive shrinking from exposure. "Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind." Just as a culprit, who, when pursued for crime, will lurk in secret to escape pursuers, so will a sinner act when confronted by his conscience. If he have slandered his neighbour, he can never meet the victim of his calumny but the retreating glance of his eye will betray the treachery of his spirit; if he have perpetrated a theft, every shadow that crosses his path will fill him with alarm; if he attempt to conceal his crimes by the cloak of religion, the mutiny within will bid defiance to such horrible stage-play. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They try to create peace by bribing the conscience. The atheist would persuade himself that he is the offspring of chance; the infidel hopes to sleep for ever in the grave; the pagan tortures himself with bodily macerations; the Romanist takes asylum in the confessional; the Pharisee thanks God that he is not as other men; the worldling rushes to the counting-house, to the tavern or to the theatre. These are some of the subtle and disastrous devices by which Satan endeavours to obscure the perceptions, to pervert the judgment, and to stifle the remonstrances of the moral sense; and all these refuges of lies must be stormed and scattered before we can present the truth in all its solemn and searching grandeur to the conscience.

3. *The Mission to the Conscience has its Responsibilities.* The conscience of man is the great judgment day in anticipation. To possess a faculty so wonderful in its structure, so quick in its movements, so stern in its decision, so terrible

in its reprisals, and so indestructible in its instincts, is indeed a talent of overwhelming magnitude, and one for which we must render a faithful account at the bar of God. If conscience, with its powerful checks and stinging rebukes, were to be banished from the world, the earth would become a scene of universal lawlessness, cruelty, and crime. And yet every man who conspires to undermine the sovereignty of conscience is responsible for contributing to accomplish this frightful result. How momentous is the calling of those who are entrusted with a mission to the conscience! It is probable that no impression once made on the conscience by words, looks or deeds, is ever wholly lost. Every such impression, whether for good or for evil, may be reproduced with all its original vividness. "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did," said the woman of Samaria. How often has the memory of a person whom you injured in days gone by called up your guilt? How often has a spot which was the scene of some folly in early life reminded you of the sins of your youth? How often has the death-bed been rather a life-bed: a sad and dismal scene, into which have been crowded the errors and crimes of a brief and wasted existence? The devout and faithful preacher of the truth would faint under the fearful pressure of his responsibilities, but he knows that the conscience of those who have slighted his counsels, neglected his warnings, and resisted his appeals, will acquit him in the last great day.

III. THE PULPIT IS A MISSION FOR GOD. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." God hath "made us ministers of the New Testament." "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The preacher is "the man of God," "the servant of the Lord," an "ambassador for Christ," a "steward of the mysteries of God," an angel of the churches, a watchman unto the house of Israel. It is in the sight of that God who has separated us to this vocation and anointed us to this work that we must fulfil our mission. If we could more habitually and vividly realise the solemn inspection under which we prosecute our duties and endure our hardships, it would give greater purity to our motives, intensity to our convictions, clearness to our conceptions, concentration to our purposes, tenderness to

our sympathies, constancy to our zeal, and steadfastness to our faith. But we must not only act under the searching scrutiny of the omniscient eye, but must refer everything which we do to God's approval. Our principles, plans, deportment, pursuits, and aims must be such as become those who are entrusted with a mission for God. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

1. *Such solemn inspection as that which is connected with the Mission of the Pulpit is a powerful motive to Fidelity in Preaching.* It will effectually check all levity, buffoonery, self-confidence, and embarrassing fear of man, and make the preacher feel that his pulpit is the symbol of all that is precious in time and dreadful in eternity; that his audience is composed of God, of angels, of disembodied spirits, and of dying men; and that the echo of his sermon will be prolonged in the songs of the redeemed, or in the groans of the lost for ever. How anxious will he be to select the most appropriate topic of discourse! how earnestly will he strive to present the truth in the most impressive form! how hard will he labour to lodge some thought in the mind which will prove the germ of an immortal life! If we could realise with greater vividness of conviction and intensity of feeling the awful fact that we are all in the very presence of the great and heart-searching God; that there are sinners in our midst who are the avowed enemies of the Lord Christ; that death is already aiming his dart at some who are carelessly listening to the Word of Life; that hell is even now moving from beneath to seize fresh victims of its endless horrors, surely we should be startled into a new experience of the solemnity and responsibility of our work. The solemn inspection of which we are now speaking extends to the pew as well as the pulpit. You are listening, while we are speaking, in the sight of God. Fidelity to the everlasting interest of your own souls should make you serious. This is not the place for thinking about the business of the week, planning schemes of pleasure, for indulging in vain speculations, for exercising a frivolous criticism, for bowing the truth out of your presence. Such conduct will not stand the glance of that flaming eye which is now fixed upon you. You are in the sight of God. Do not shun his face; do not despise the

riches of his love; do not quench his Holy Spirit; do not trample under foot his beloved Son; do not sport with the thunderbolts of everlasting wrath. Such rash and thankless conduct cannot evade detection or escape retribution. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

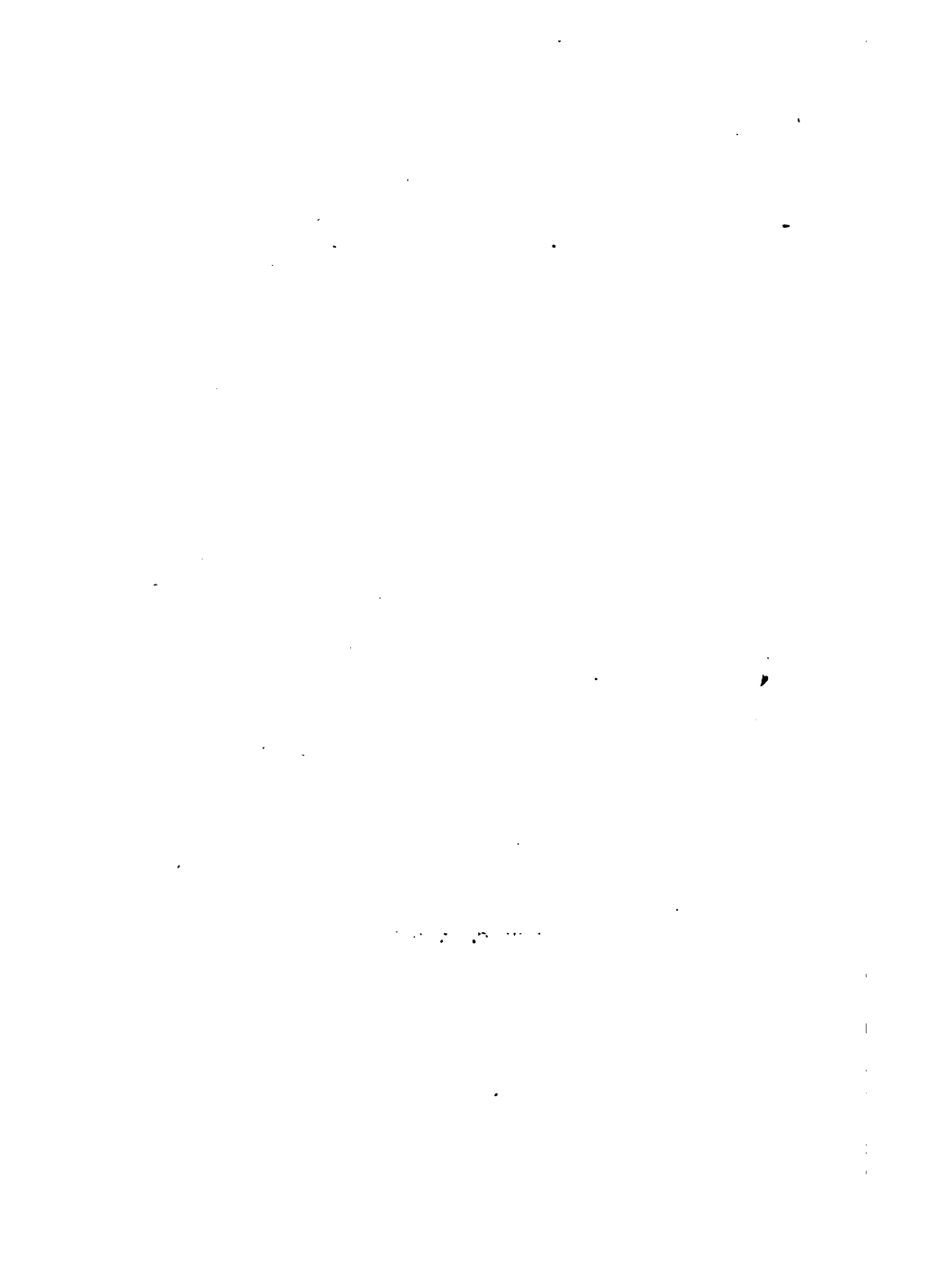
2. *Such solemn inspection as that which is connected with the Mission of the Pulpit is a powerful motive to Patience in Trial.* This is a world of severe, complicated, diversified, and protracted trial. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Every preacher has his share, arising from the common and inevitable ills of life, from a painful and humiliating consciousness of his infirmities and shortcomings; from the want of more frequent and extensive success in his ministry; from the unwatchfulness and instability of some who were once the object of his rejoicing and hope; from the worldly conformity and selfish lukewarmness of too many of his flock; from the feebleness and depression of Zion; from the combined opposition which is made to the truth and the sad dishonour which is put on the Saviour; from the ignorance, idolatry, wretchedness, and suffering of so many hundreds of millions of our race who are still surrounded with the darkness of an unbroken midnight. It is under these circumstances that the mighty promise, "Lo! I am with you alway," unfolds its wondrous consolation. The preacher knows that the awful strife between truth and error, righteousness and iniquity, purity and sensuality, heaven and hell, Christ and Belial, is not left to the caprice of a fickle chance or to the sweep of an inexorable fatalism; but that in the sight of God "all things work together for the good of them that love God." It was a calm and unfaltering persuasion of this glorious fact which gave such heroic serenity to the martyr Stephen when his murderers gnashed on him with their teeth; it was the like persuasion which enabled the great Apostle of the Gentiles to exclaim, "None of these things move me;" it was this that prompted the German monk to say, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would still go thither;" it is this which constrains the lonely missionary of the cross when surrounded by habitations of cruelty and gigantic systems of ancient idolatry to say "For the weapons of our warfare are

not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Adversities may darken around us, difficulties may menace us, men may frown, and devils rage; but with the eye of God upon us, and with the heaven of God before us, we shall be able to breast the storm and to seize the crown.

3. *Such solemn inspection as that which is connected with the Mission of the Pulpit is an assurance of Ultimate Success.*

(1.) If our preaching is to be effective, we must preach the *Law* and the *Gospel* in their inseparable connection and practical harmony. We must preach the law in order to probe the conscience; we must preach the Gospel in order to heal it. The preaching of the law alone will lead to Pharisaism; the preaching of the Gospel alone will lead to Antinomianism; the preaching of both will, by God's blessing, issue in a pure and living Christianity. These two elements—the law and the Gospel—are blended throughout the entire Bible. There is Gospel in the Old Testament. and there is law in the Gospel.

(2.) We may gather from our text the perilous condition and awful doom of those who sit under the preaching of the Gospel but are indifferent to their responsibilities and neglectful of their privileges. The veil of prejudice, of worldliness, of unbelief, of insensibility, is gathering around you, and rendering you impervious to all that is searching in the light of God's truth, and softening in the tenderness of God's love. We pray you to wake up from the awful drowsiness which is creeping over your spirit and hurrying you into the darkness of an everlasting midnight. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But awake now. While Sabbath suns shine upon you; while holy sanctuaries welcome you to their solemnities; while the Gospel of a free salvation is sounding in your ears; while the Spirit of grace is striving with your conscience; while the great intercessor is pleading with God on your behalf; and while the merciful Lord is asking, "Why will ye die?" We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. But, whether you are saved or lost, we shall be pure of your blood, and unto God a sweet savour of Christ, if, "by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."





REV. G. W. MCCREE.

ANGELS AND MEN.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN BOROUGH ROAD CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON SUNDAY
EVENING, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1874.

By THE REV. GEORGE W. MCCREE.

"I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—*Luke xv. 10.*

THIS is a remarkable saying. It affirms the existence of angels—an order of beings superior to men in their intelligence, purity, grandeur of condition, and high intercourse with God. They dwell with Him and do His will. They are His servants: His glorious ministers who do His pleasure. It also affirms the benevolent interest which they take in the affairs of men. Angels are men's friends and helpers. When God laid the foundation of the earth and created man upon it, then did the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. When the shining messenger came swiftly from heaven to say to the watching shepherds of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," we are told that suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." When Jesus was faint and sorrowful in the Garden of Gethsamene, an angel came to strengthen Him. When Peter lay in prison an angel opened the doors of his dungeon, and set him free. And still, still the bright ones watch over

us, and keep us, for they are ministering spirits sent forth by the Lord of angels to minister unto the heirs of salvation.

The existence, intelligence, benevolence, and profound interest in our destiny having been thus illustrated, let us proceed to consider

I.—*The event which excites the joy of the angelic host.*

What is the event? Is it the coronation of a king? Is it news of a great victory on some blood-stained field? Is it the triumph of a political party? No; it is the repentance of "one sinner." Behold Manassah seeking God! The angels are glad. Behold Saul of Tarsus praying! The heavenly multitude rejoice. Behold the weeping Mary at the Saviour's feet! The celestial host sing for joy. Behold the penitent thief appealing for mercy! The angelic multitude hasten to welcome him into Paradise. Down here in Southwark a sinner repents; far away yonder the glorious angels see his tears, and rejoice with "fulness of joy." No matter whether he is rich or poor—king or peasant—young or old; stained with a few sins, or vile with many, the exalted angels of God will pity and welcome him as he hastens to the Cross for mercy, and to heaven for rest. What encouragement here to repent of our sins. Ashamed, humbled, broken hearted, *silent because of the greatness of our grief and shame*, we may be taunted by our foes, and forsaken by our friends, but "God is Love;" Jesus can save to the uttermost; and the angels will sing aloud when they know that we have repented of our sins, and passed from death unto life.

Let us proceed to consider :

II.—*The reasons which probably induce the angels of God to rejoice over one sinner that repenteth.*

There are ample reasons for their joy. We can conceive, for example, this reason: *The desire of angels to see God glorified.* The realms of heaven do often resound with angelic voices, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." But the sinner, the unconverted person does not, cannot glorify God. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." The sinner's mind is rebellious; the peni-

tent's mind is submissive. The sinner's mind hates God; the penitent's mind loves God. The sinner's mind is without God; the penitent's mind longs after and desires God more than life. Hence the joy of angels. They see the rebel lay down his sword, and yield to God. They see him forsaking evil ways, and walking in the paths of honour, temperance, piety, and heaven. They hear him singing—

“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.”

And as they hear his song, and marks how he seeks to glorify their Creator and Lord, they are filled with blessed emotions of gladness and delight.

We can conceive, also, this reason: *The angels know that when a sinner repents the Cross of Christ is vindicated and accepted.* Angels bow down before that wondrous Being who lived and died and rose again. Throughout all His marvellous course they followed Him with their entranced gaze.

“Through all His travels here below,
They did His steps attend;
Oft wondering how, and where at last,
This scene of love would end.

“As on the torturing cross He hung,
And darkness veiled the sky,
Amazed they saw that awful sight,
The Lord of Glory die.”

They know why He died on the Cross. They know that He endured the Cross that he might save sinners, and that peace, righteousness, and eternal life are through Him—that is, through His precious blood—shed for the remission of sins. Hence, when they behold a penitent sinner fly with outstretched arms to the crucified Jesus, they know that He will soon see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and they make their harps of gold peal forth melodious notes in celebration of another victory won by Christ, for—

“Honour immortal must be paid,
Instead of scandal and of scorn,
While glory shines around His head,
And a bright crown without a thorn.”

We can conceive of this reason: *The angels know what it is for a soul to be saved or lost.* "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," then they have seen bright forms cast from the golden thrones of heaven into the abyss of woe, and they have thus known that God's wrath can be revealed against sinning angels. And there is no improbability in thinking that they have seen sinners lost. They, doubtless, saw Judas go to his "own place." They, doubtless, saw Dives when "He lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments." Yes, they know what a lost soul is. They could tell you the meaning, the awful meaning of such Biblical phrases as "an horrible tempest," "everlasting burnings," "everlasting punishment," and "the vengeance of eternal fire." From afar they have seen "the great gulf" which keeps apart for evermore the sun-like host of God, and the doomed servants of the wicked one, and, consequently, they could tell you what is meant by the most fearful of all words—HELL.

The angels also know what it is for a soul to be saved. They see us repent; they see us forgiven; they see us live; they see us die; and they welcome us to "everlasting habitations." When we feel the dark shadows of death assembling around our heads, we may exclaim—

Come, ye angelic envoys, come,
And lead the willing pilgrim home;
Ye know the way to Jesus' throne,
Source of my joys and of your own,

and, surrounded, they will conduct the horses and the chariot of fire to where you wait, and thus lead you to the boundless world of light and peace. There, seated on a throne exceeding high, clearer than crystal, fairer than ivory and pearl, more precious than much fine gold, is Jesus waiting for the ransomed soul, and—

"Seraphs with elevated strains,
Circle the throne around;
And move and charm the starry plains,
With an immortal sound."

Yes, they know what it is for a soul to be saved. They

could tell you what is meant by "glory," by "a crown of life," by "pleasures for evermore," by "the Kingdom of God," by "paradise," by "everlasting salvation," by "immortality," and by "eternal life." Hence their joy when a sinner repents and is saved. They know that the gates of hell have been closed, and the gates of heaven opened. They know that another name has been written in the Book of Life. They know that another dweller on earth is fitted to become a dweller in heaven. And knowing this they look down with complacency and hope upon "one sinner that repenteth."

We can conceive, moreover, of this reason: *The angels of God anticipate our fellowship in heaven.* The celestial country is not like that new north-land of which some of us have read so recently in the public journals. A land of snow and silence and solitude; a land without trees, or flowers, or fruits, or birds, or men. Desolation and Death there! Beauty, Concourse, Song, Joy, Life yonder! Oh! think of the countless congregation of the blessed in glory. We shall, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, come unto Mount Sion; we shall come unto the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem; we shall come to an innumerable company of angels; we shall come to the general assembly and church of the first-born; we shall come to God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect. "To an innumerable company of angels." Yes, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to Gabriel and Michael, the archangels of God. Yes, to David, Samuel, and all the prophets, and the Beautiful Ones who watched the sepulchre of Christ. To Paul and all the apostles, and Stephen and all the martyrs, and to all the angelic ministers of God, who wait for them and us.

Lend, lend your wings; I mount, I fly;
O grave! where is thy victory?
O death! where is thy sting?

The angels know that the saints shall join them in Heaven, purified from all the stains and tears of earth, and, hence, their joy when the sinner repents. They, then, have another friend, companion, lover: another brother and sister in Christ Jesus, and, this enhances and enlarges their present joy.

For these and other conceivable reasons, then, angels rejoice over one sinner that repented.

Let me now proceed to enquire: *Shall angels rejoice over any of ourselves to night?* Repentance is the first step towards Heaven. Have you taken it, my brother? Have you taken it, my sister? The first step towards Heaven! It is time to take it, for the voice of Jesus may be heard pealing through the ages, saying: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel. Except ye repent, ye shall perish." The first step towards Heaven! It is time for you to take it, for, there comes another solemn voice saying: "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." *The first step towards Heaven!* Who will take it now? Angels are waiting to witness your first tear: to listen to your first prayer. Shall they wait in vain?

What a moment is this! God is gracious and waits to receive you with sovereign love. Jesus is "mighty to save," and waits to cleanse you from all sin, and to array you in spotless, splendid righteousness for evermore. The Holy Spirit is present, and waiting to illumine and sanctify your soul. Angels throng around us now, and are willing, eager, longing to awake the echoes of Heaven with exultant songs over your repentance and conversion to God. Come, come, come:

"The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Are ready with their shining host,
All Heaven is ready to resound,
The dead's alive! the lost is found!"

Come sinners, come penitents, come broken-hearted men and women, come to Jesus. He will save and comfort, and glorify you. Come to Him; come to Jesus now. I will not let you go. I claim you for my Christ, my Christ of the five wounds received on Calvary for you, and for your sins. You are coming, are you not? Yes, you are casting away idols, follies, sins, and crimes to come to the Cross of Christ for mercy. Your face is wet with tears; your heart is throbbing with holy sorrow; your trembling hand clasps the hand of Jesus, and lo! lo! you are saved,—saved for ever and ever. Sing ye angels of God; sing a song more

sweet and loud than when the young earth emerged into primeval light, for see, wonder of wonders, wrought by infinite grace, is a new-born soul emerging into "marvellous light," even "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Sing, ye angels, sing, for the Lord alone hath done it; His right hand hath gotten Him this victory. He hath taken the prey from the mighty; He hath lifted up the fallen. He hath saved the lost. Therefore, sing, ye angels, sing : "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN."

THE DUTY OF THE PREACHER.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON DELIVERED BY THE

REV. J. CLEMENT FRENCH,

BEFORE THE PRESBYTERY, BROOKLYN, U.S.A.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—*Luke* iv. 18, 19.

IT was no part of the Jew's religion to preach the Gospel to the poor. What cared the phylactered Pharisee for the poor publican? What concern had the Priest and the Levite for the body or soul of the wounded and bleeding traveller? But the Gospel, which taught men the blessed charities of the text, was to begin in the lower strata and orders of society, working up through them, leavening the masses, until, impressed by its spirit of self-denial, patience, forgiveness, and universal love, one by one the Nicodemuses, and the noblemen, and the men having authority, should come to Christ and His apostles to learn its nature and power, and even the haughty Greeks should say, "We would see Jesus."

Nothing can long resist a religious system with such a prospectus as Christ's preached with power, lived with consistency. . . . Its spirit may be embodied in either philosopher or peasant. The minion may be as good a Christian as the king; the publican as true an apostle as Paul. Learning alone makes no one an experimental Christian, as description alone can give the blind no adequate

conception of colour. One glimpse is worth more than volumes of splendid word-painting. . . . A profession will be in men's ears only as sounding brass, while a good act, through which Christian love shines, will be as music to which angels have given the key-note, and which breathes of its home and origin in a better clime than this. Christ was Divine love expressed, philanthropy concrete. Like Christ, some men "go about doing good." They are living epistles. Men may, *must* read them. One such man is a host. He is the embodied logic and love of the Gospel. He is the illuminated plate of its volume. He is the Great Heart of its pilgrims. He can chase a thousand revilers. He is Christianity's Gibraltar. Infidelity may sometimes spike the guns of the apologist and reasoner, but it goes down before the force and fire of a consecrated, godly life.

The Gospel was not given to teach men theories and abstractions. It is not a treatise upon philosophy, yet it *embodies* a philosophy which no sage of earth, untaught of the Spirit, can explain or fathom. It is not professedly a book of science, yet its assertions have stimulated scientific minds to inquiries which have evolved the profoundest systems of truth. It is not by proclamation a book of eloquence or poetry, yet no orators or bards ever discoursed in such matchless numbers as the "holy men of God." Its geology is the theology of the Rock of Ages. Its astronomy is the science and law of the earth's moral revolution around the "bright and morning star." Its chemistry is the affinity of changed and loving hearts for their Lord and Master, and the crystallisation of penitential tears and loving labours in the vases of God's eternal palace.

Its botany is a Divine analysis of the "Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley." Its meteorology conducts to no "probabilities," but to the eternal certainty that "at evening time there shall be light," and that he who was the Crucified shall come in clouds, and every eye shall see Him.

The science of the Bible is the science of salvation Its beauties are not an end, but the casual accompaniment of the strength and majesty of its truth. They are like the carmine on the cheek of youth—the incident and index of health. . . .

The work of those who preach the Gospel, whether lay or ordained, is the most practical possible. It is every-day work. It comes right down to the sober and earnest realities of life. It has nothing to do with the nebulous regions of speculation.

It has no patience with the tilts and tournaments of ecclesiastical knights-errant, nor with the jousting of the heresy-hunters who have kept the Church in a broil ever since the days of the Fathers—men who have wrangled and fought unto the death without once looking to see if the sign under which they were quarrelling had not both a silver and a golden side. There have never been wanting those who have seemed more anxious to prove that a certain Greek preposition always means “into,” than to save souls. . . . It is of small consequence to know how precisely sin got *into* the world; only so that God is not made the author of it. The problem that presses every man of God now is, “How shall we get it *out*?”

Libraries crowded with ingenious theories will never help any one to heaven. Such speculative work is wasted. Every blow of the Christian athlete should fall like a trip-hammer upon the head of the old serpent. Christ preached the Gospel to the poor. So must we. But we do *not* do it according to our ability and measure. We build houses of worship which the poor hardly dare enter. A premium is put upon a spurious aristocracy of wealth and fashion. The Gospel is made an expensive luxury. But times revolve, though slowly. There are some evidences that a better time draws on. Missions among our poor are a sign of it. Open-air preaching is a sign of it. Churches built upon models which do not sacrifice all acoustic principles to garish splendour are a sign of it. The discarding of the “dim religious light” is a sign of it. Bethels floating in docks for seamen’s worship are a sign of it. The day is coming—it *must* come—before the earth becomes the Lord’s morally, when on the portal of every temple, however magnificent its architecture, however richly plushed its pews, however splendid its ministry, shall be inscribed, “Come in, thou child of poverty! Here the Gospel is free! Here the rich and poor meet together the Lord, the Maker of them all.” . . .

Christ also preached deliverance to the captives and to "set at liberty them that are bound." Thank God! His ministers have thrown off some of their shackles!

We have hardly need to preach now against physical bonds. For the day in which the Gospel was made to pirouette around an institution which chattelised the image of God is past. The logic of God's providence was stronger than the entrenchments of custom, prejudice, and false doctrine. The trumpet, blown on Zion's walls, gave no uncertain sound, and Jericho fell.

But there are other fetters which the Gospel must smite—the corruption, the intemperance, the licentiousness, the avarice, the social cancers, the rationalism, the disjointed, crazy systems of Church polity, the melancholy ecclesiastical wrangles, the schisms, and the sectism of the age.

To convince men of sin, righteousness, and a judgment to come; to prove the doctrines of Christianity as a system; to impress the tremendous and engaging truths of religion upon men, we are called upon to compass the earth and the heavens, yea, to scour the universe for arguments. We are to compel into the service, according to our ability, things vast, and things minute; realities and fancies—anything, everything within the range of Gospel propriety to woo and win the erring, to call the penitent sinner up to the higher life in Christ.

We have no time to waste in squabbles. If fundamental truths and principles are endangered, let us rise *en masse* to defend them! For vital, elemental truth, let us fight unto the death! But let us not mistake volumes of splendid smoke for fire. We must not glory too much in the enthusiasm and speech-making of great assemblies. Work—practical, earnest, consecrated; combination—real, perfect unity; Jesus Christ our only rallying-cry; the Bible our palladium; the universal brotherhood in Christ, our embodied, actual, social creed; the conversion of the world our expectation; truth, faith, prayer, labour, our weapons—*these* are our need, our strength, our victory!

We can sing and rejoice—we *must*; we can take glimpses now and here of the apocalypse of heaven's rest and joy, but let them be only inspirations to nobler deed, to grander faith

Music is sweet. The alleluias of great, praising throngs swayed by a common sentiment, these are grand; and when we get to heaven, and earth is redeemed, and there is no longer any sin to fight, it will be glorious to see the one hundred and forty-four thousand standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire, and to hear the music of their harps of God; but *now*, with error rampant, with the devil's forces massed and challenging, we would rather see one hundred and forty-four thousand saints of God on the solid ground, and each with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, in his hand, "*moving right on the enemy's works!*"

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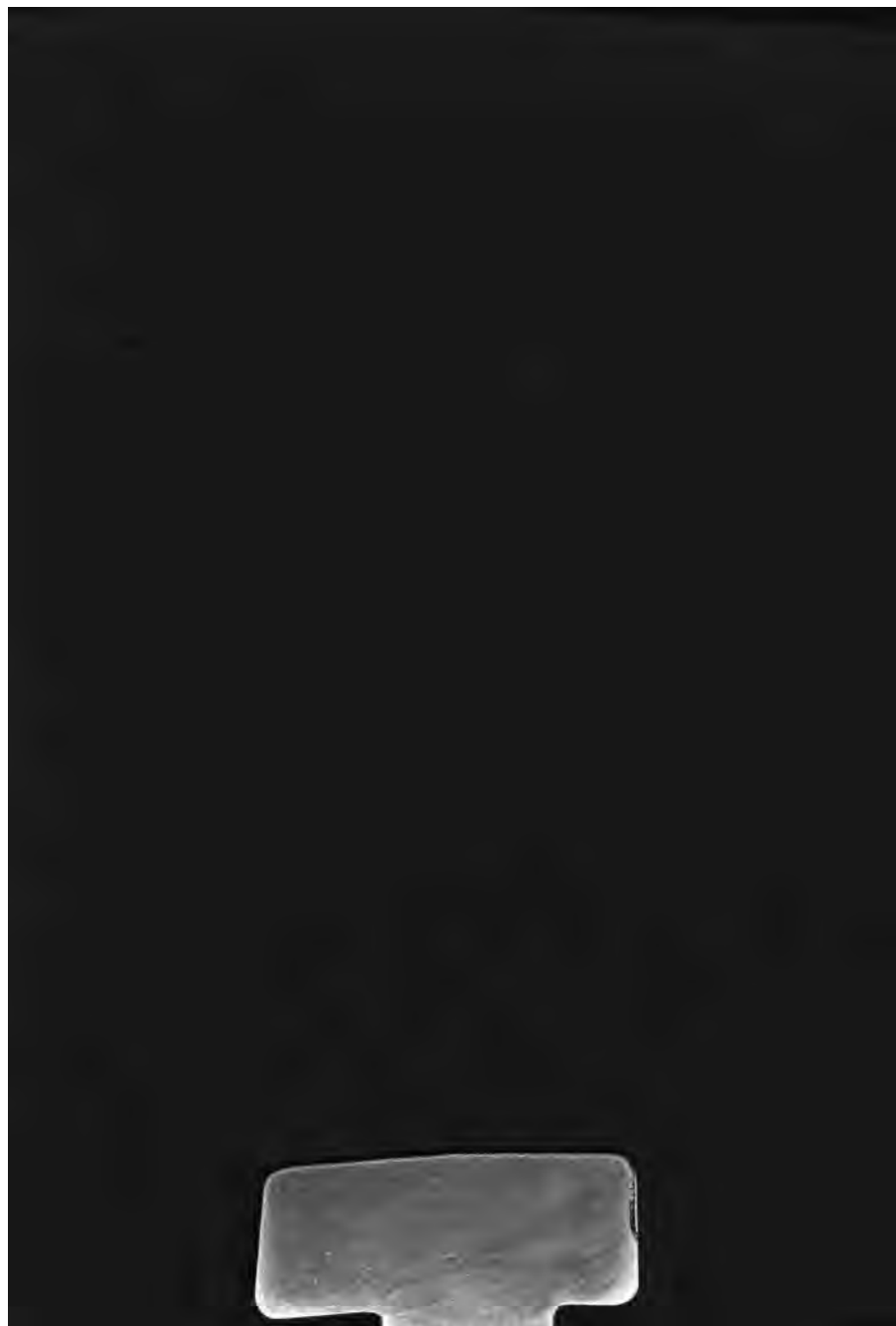
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the 1990s, the number of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia has increased in the United Kingdom (Meltzer and Peck 1998). The prevalence of schizophrenia in the United Kingdom is estimated to be 1.2% (Meltzer and Peck 1998).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The United Kingdom has a number of national strategies for mental health care, including the 1998 *Mental Health Act* (MHA) and the 1999 *Mental Health Strategy* (MHS). The MHA and MHS both emphasize the need to improve the lives of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and to ensure that they are treated in a humane and effective manner.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the effectiveness of mental health services. This includes the need to improve the quality of care, to ensure that services are accessible to all, and to ensure that services are cost-effective. The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the involvement of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia in the development and delivery of mental health services.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the training and development of mental health professionals. This includes the need to improve the quality of training, to ensure that professionals are equipped with the skills and knowledge to provide effective care, and to ensure that professionals are able to work in a team and to communicate effectively with people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the research and evaluation of mental health services. This includes the need to improve the quality of research, to ensure that research is relevant to the needs of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and to ensure that research is able to provide evidence to inform the development and delivery of mental health services.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the monitoring and evaluation of mental health services. This includes the need to improve the quality of monitoring, to ensure that monitoring is able to provide evidence to inform the development and delivery of mental health services, and to ensure that monitoring is able to identify areas for improvement.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the funding of mental health services. This includes the need to ensure that mental health services are adequately funded, to ensure that services are able to provide effective care, and to ensure that services are able to meet the needs of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

The MHA and MHS also emphasize the need to improve the public awareness of mental health issues. This includes the need to ensure that the public is able to understand the needs of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, to ensure that the public is able to provide support to people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and to ensure that the public is able to participate in the development and delivery of mental health services.